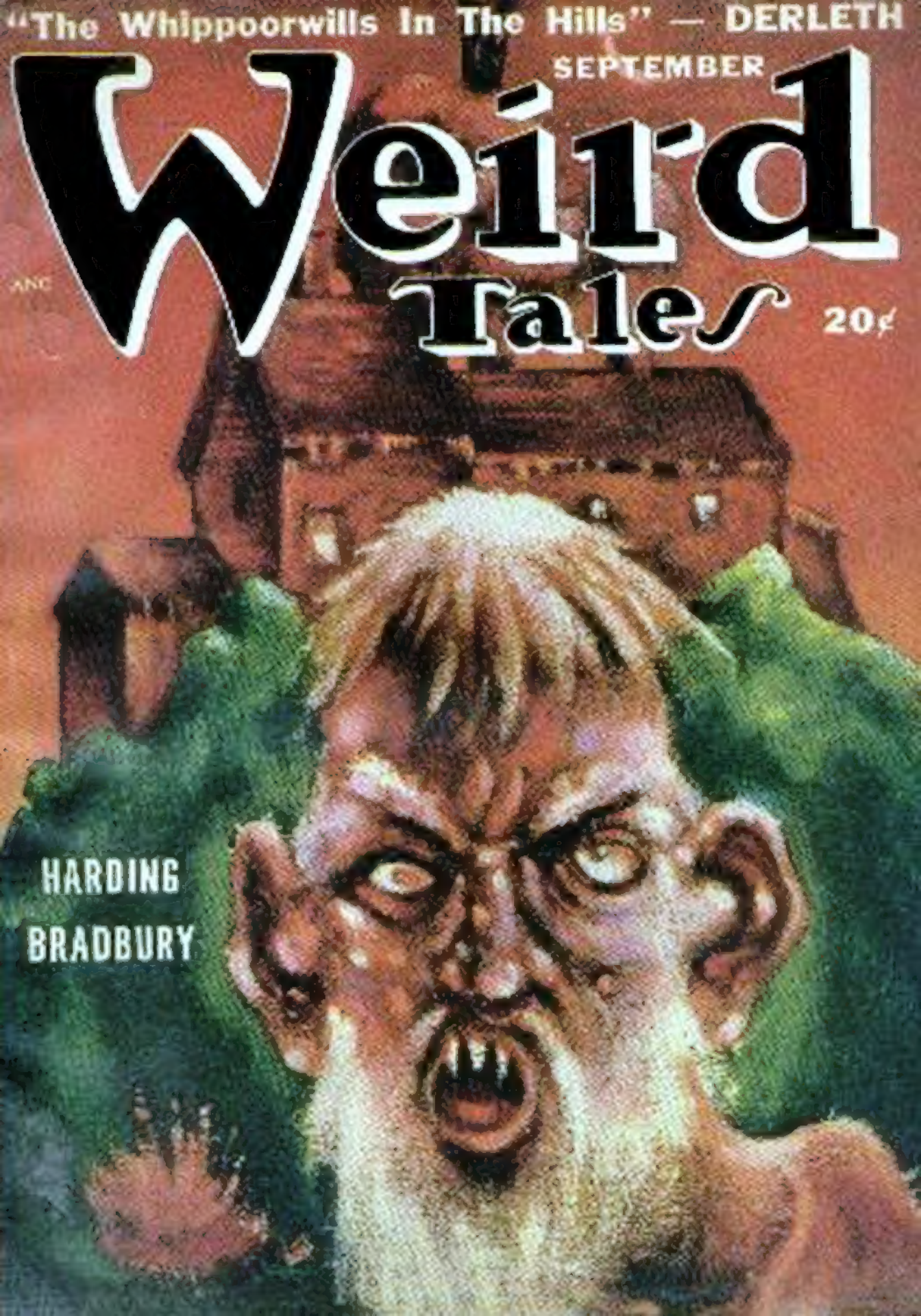
"The Whippoorwills In The Hills" — DERLETH

SEPTEMBER

Weird Tales

20¢



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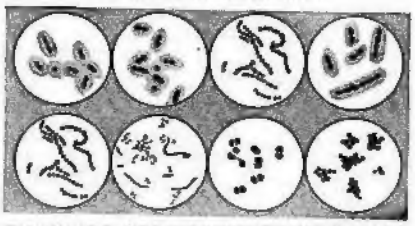

TOP ROW, left to right: Pneumococcus Type III, Pneumococcus Type IV, Streptococcus Viridans, Friedlander's Bacillus. BOTTOM ROW, left to right: Streptococcus Hemolyticus, Bacillus Influenzae, Micrococcus Catarrhalis, Staphylococcus Aureus.

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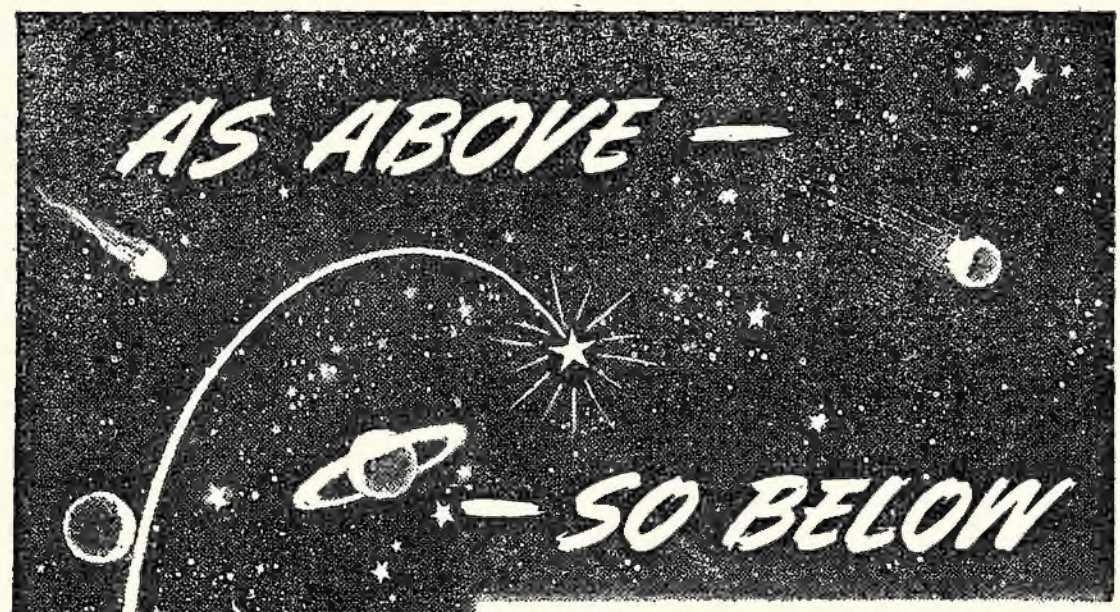

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ALL STORIES NEW — NO REPRINTS

SEPTEMBER, 1948 Cover by Lee Brown Coye

LONG NOVELETTE

THE WHIPPOORWILLS IN THE HILLS . . . . August Derleth 4
The ghastly sound swelled from the black hills into the valley, surrounding the house with waves of cacophonous horror.

NOVELETTE

THE FOLLOWER . . . . . Allison V. Harding 34
A trail that begins in life and ends only with death.

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We know the way germs multiply—suppose they go on and grow big and bigger!

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She was fascinated by the image of the tiles—heedless of the danger.

THE BEASTS THAT TREAD THE WORLD . . . . . Harold Lawlor 48
A woman pursued by monsters, but only in a nightmare, should not have scars to show for it in the morning.

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Decisions made on other days, in other lives can affect us now and today.

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The most unusual, unheard of and deadly kind of strange talent.

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Our troubled world is full of displaced persons but the man in the black cloak was surely the strangest.

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Lebrun's cider possessed a curious quality. Delightful until you knew the ingredients.

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Everyone agreed that the strange man was there, but no two people agreed on what he looked like.

VERSE

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Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

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D. McILWRAITH, *Editor* LAMONT BUCHANAN, *Associate Editor*

9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y.

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We're sorry that lack of space prevents the inclusion of the names of all New Members. The rest will appear next time.

The Whippoorwills in the Hills

BY AUGUST DERLETH

I TOOK possession of my cousin Abel Harrop's house on the last day of April, 1928, because it was plain by that time that the men from the sheriff's office at Aylesbury were either unable or unwilling to make any progress in explaining his disappearance, and I was determined therefore to carry on my own investigation. This was a matter of principle, rather than of affection, for my cousin Abel had always been somewhat apart from the rest of the family; he had had a reputation since his adolescence for being queer and had never made any effort to visit the rest of us or to invite our own visits. Nor was his plain house in a remote valley seven miles off the Aylesbury Pike out of Arkham particularly a place to excite interest in most of us, who lived in Boston and Portland. I especially want this to be clear, since subsequent events make it imperative that no other motive be ascribed to my coming to stay in the house.

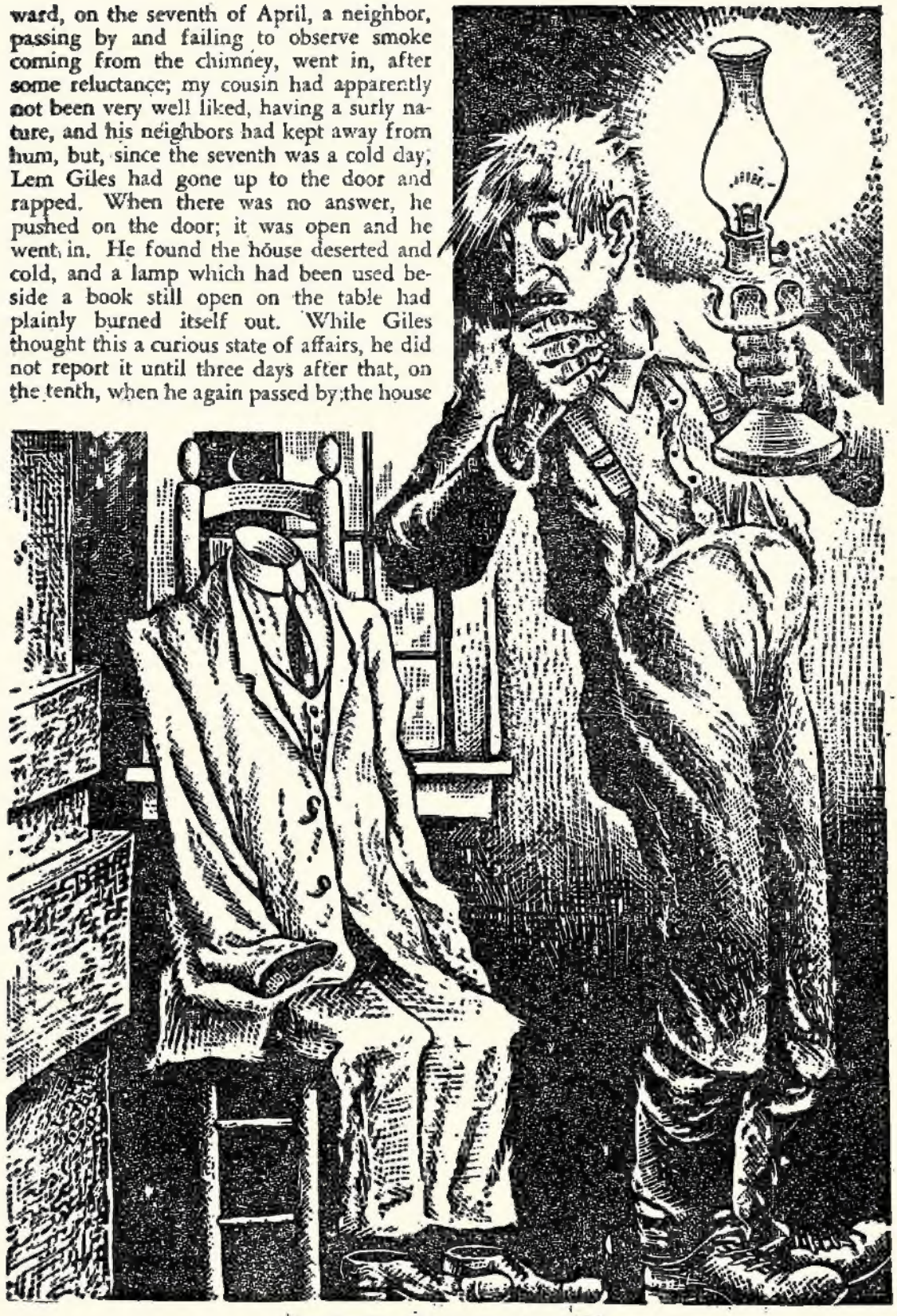
My cousin Abel's home was, as I have said, very plain. It was built in the conventional fashion of New England houses, many of which can be seen in scores of villages throughout New England and even farther south; it was a kind of rectangular house, of two stories, with a stoop out back and a front porch set in one corner in order to complete the rectangle. This porch had at one time been efficiently screened, but there were now small tears in the screen, and it presented a general air of decay. However, the house itself, which was of wood, was neat enough; its siding had been painted white less than a year before my cousin's disappearance, and this coat of paint had worn well enough so that the house seemed quite new, as apart from the screened porch. There was a woodshed off to the right, and a smokehouse near that. There was also an open well, with a roof over it, and a windlass with buckets on it. On the left there was another, more serviceable pump, and two smaller sheds. As my cousin did not farm, there was no place for animals.

The interior of the house was in good condition. Clearly, my cousin had always kept it well, though the furnishings were somewhat worn and faded, having been inherited from his parents, who had died two decades before. The lower floor consisted of a small, confining kitchen which opened to the stoop out back, an old-fashioned parlor, somewhat larger than most, and a room which had evidently once been a dining room, but which had been converted into a study by my cousin Abel, and was filled with books—on crude, home-made shelves, on boxes, chairs, a secretary and the table. There were even piles of them on the floor, and one book lay open on the table, just as it had lain when my cousin disappeared; they had told me at the courthouse in Aylesbury that nothing had been disturbed. The second story was a gable story; its rooms all had sloping roofs, though there were three of them, all small, two of which were bedrooms, and the third a storeroom. Each room had one gable-window, no more. One of the bedrooms was over the kitchen, one over the parlor, and the store-room was over the study. There was no reason to believe that my cousin Abel had occupied either of the bedrooms, however; indications were that he made use of a couch in the parlor, and, since the couch was softer than usual, I determined to use it also. The stairway to the second floor led up out of the kitchen, thereby contributing to the lack of room.

THE events of my cousin's disappeaarance were very simple, as any reader who may remember the spare newspaper accounts can testify. He had last been seen in Aylesbury early in April; he had bought five pounds of coffee, ten pounds of sugar, some wire, and a large amount of netting. Four days after-

"It was that night, the night of the full moon, that the horror struck the Pocket."

ward, on the seventh of April, a neighbor, passing by and failing to observe smoke coming from the chimney, went in, after some reluctance; my cousin had apparently not been very well liked, having a surly nature, and his neighbors had kept away from him, but, since the seventh was a cold day, Lem Giles had gone up to the door and rapped. When there was no answer, he pushed on the door; it was open and he went in. He found the house deserted and cold, and a lamp which had been used beside a book still open on the table had plainly burned itself out. While Giles thought this a curious state of affairs, he did not report it until three days after that, on the tenth, when he again passed by the house



Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

on his way to Aylesbury, and, stopping for a similar reason, found nothing altered in any way in the house. At that time he spoke to a storekeeper in Aylesbury about it and was advised to report the matter at the sheriff's office. With great reluctance, he did so. A deputy sheriff drove out to my cousin's place and looked around. Since there had been a thaw, there was nothing to show footprints, the snow having been quickly melted away. And since only a little of the coffee and sugar my cousin had bought had been used, it was assumed that he had vanished within a day or so of his visit to Aylesbury. There was some evidence—as there still was in the loose pile of netting in a rocking-chair in one corner of the parlor—that my cousin was planning to do something with the netting he had bought; but, since it was of the type used in seines along the coast at Kingsport for the purpose of catching rough fish, his intention was obscured in some mystery.

The efforts of the sheriff's men from Aylesbury were, as I have hinted, only perfunctory. There was nothing to show that they were eager to investigate Abel's disappearance; perhaps they were too readily discouraged by the reticence of his neighbors. I did not mean to be. If the reports of the sheriff's men were reliable—and I had no reason to believe they were not—then his neighbors had steadfastly avoided Abel and even now, after his disappearance, when he was presumed dead, they were no more willing to speak of him than they had been to associate with him before. Indeed, I had tangible evidence of the neighbor's feeling before I had been in my cousin's house a day.

Though the house was not wired for electric lights, it was on a telephone line. When the telephone rang in mid-afternoon—less than two hours after my arrival at the house—I went over and took the receiver off the hook, forgetting that my cousin was on a party line. I had been dilatory to answer, and when I removed the receiver, someone was already talking. Even then, I would have replaced the receiver without more ado, had it not been for mention of my cousin's name. Being possessed of a natural share of curiosity, I stood still, listening.

". . . somebody's come to Abe Harrop's house," came a woman's voice. "Lem come by there from town ten minutes ago and seen it."

Ten minutes, I thought. That would be Lem Giles' place, the nearest neighbor up the Pocket and over the hill.

"Oh, Mis' Giles, ye don't s'pose *he's* come back?"

"Hope the Lord he don't! But 'tain't *him*. Leastwise, Lem said it didn't look like him nohow."

"If *he* comes back, I want to git aout o' here. There's been enough goin's-on for a decent body."

"They ain't found hide nor hair of *him*."

"An' they wun't, neither. *They* got him. I knowed he was a-callin' 'em. Amos told him right off to git rid o' them books, but he knowed better. A-settin' there night after night, readin' in them devilish books."

"Don't you worry none, Hester."

"All these goin's-on, it's a God's mercy a body's alive to worry!"

THIS somewhat ambiguous conversation convinced me that the natives of this secluded Pocket of hill country knew far more than they had told the men from the sheriff's office. But this initial conversation was only the beginning. Thereafter the telephone rang at half-hour intervals, and my arrival at my cousin's house was the principal topic of conversation. Thereafter, too, I listened shamelessly.

The neighbors circling the Pocket where the house stood numbered seven families, none of which was in sight of any part of my cousin's house. There were, in this order: up the Pocket, Lem and Abby Giles, and their two sons, Arthur and Albert, with one daughter, Virginia, a feeble-minded girl in her late twenties; beyond them, well up into the next Pocket, Lute and Jethro Corey, bachelors, with a hired man, Curtis Begbie; east of them, deep in the hills, Seth Whateley, his wife, Emma, and their three children, Willie, Mamie, and Ella; down from them, and opposite my cousin's house about a mile to the east, Laban Hough, a widower, his children, Susie and Peter, and his sister, Lavinia; about a half-mile further down, along the road that led into the Pocket, Clem Osborn and his wife, Marie, with two hired men, John and Andrew Baxter; and finally, over the hills west of

my cousin's house, Rufus and Angeline Wheeler, with their sons, Perry and Nathaniel, and the three spinster Hutchins sisters, Hester, Josephine, and Amelia, with two hired men, Jesse Trumbull and Amos Whateley.

All these people were connected to the single party line which included my cousin's telephone. In the course of three hours, what with one woman calling another, back and forth without any end before suppertime, everyone on the line had been informed of my coming, and, as each woman added her bit of information, each of the others learned who I was, and correctly guessed my purpose. All this was perhaps natural enough in such isolated neighborhoods, where the most trivial event is a subject of deep concern to people who have little else to engage their attention; but what was disturbing about this fire of gossip on the party wire was the unmistakable undercurrent of fear which was omnipresent. Clearly, my cousin Abel Harrop had been shunned for some reason connected with this incredible fear of him and whatever it was he was doing. It was sobering to reflect that out of such primitive fear could very easily rise the decision to kill in order to escape that fear.

I knew it would be no easy task to break down the suspicious reserve of the neighbors, but I was determined that it must and would be done. I retired early that night, but I did not reckon with the difficulties of going to sleep in such an environment as my cousin's house. Where I had expected an unbroken silence, I found instead a maddening cacophony of sound which assaulted and engulfed the house. Beginning a half-hour after sundown, in mid-twilight, there was such a calling of whippoorwills as I have never heard before; where one bird had called alone for five minutes or thereabouts, in thirty minutes there were twenty birds calling, and in an hour the number of whippoorwills seemed to have risen to well over a hundred. Moreover, the configuration of the Pocket was such that the hills at one side threw back the echoes of sounds from the other, so that the voices of a hundred birds soon assumed the proportions of two, varying in intensity from a demanding scream rising with explosive force from just beyond my window to a faintly whispered call coming from far up or down the valley. Knowing a little of the habits of whippoorwills, I fully expected the calls to cease within an hour of beginning, and to start up again just before dawn. In this I was mistaken. Not only did the birds call incessantly all night long, but it was unmistakably evident that a large number of them flew in from the woods to sit on the roof of the house, as well as on the sheds and the ground around the house, making such a deafening racket that I was completely unable to sleep until dawn, when, one by one, they drifted away and were silent.

I knew then that I could not long withstand this nerve-wracking cacophony of song.

I had not slept an hour before I was awakened, still exhausted, by the ringing of the telephone. I got up and took down the receiver, wondering what was wanted at this hour, and who was calling. I muttered a sleepy, "Hello."

"Harrop?"

"This is Dan Harrop," I said.

"Got suthin' to tell ye. Air ye listenin'?"

"Who is this?" I asked.

"Listen t' me, Harrop. If you knows what's good fer ye, ye'll git aout o' there as fast as ye c'n git!"

Before I could register my astonishment, the line went dead. I was still somewhat drowsy from lack of sleep. I stood for a moment; then hung up the receiver. A man's voice, gruff and old. Certainly one of the neighbors; the telephone bell had rung as if it had been ground by someone on the line and not by the central.

I WAS halfway back to my makeshift bed in the parlor when the telephone rang again. Though it was not my ring, I turned back to it at once. The hour was now six-thirty, and the sun shone over the hill. It was Emma Whateley calling Lavinia Hough.

"Vinnie, did ye hear 'em las' night?"

"Land sakes, yes! Emma, do you s'pose it means. . . ?"

"I don't know. It was suthin' turrible the way they went on. Ain't heerd nuthin' like it since Abel was aout in the woods las'

summer. Kept Willie and Mamie awake all night. It scares me, Vinnie."

"Me, too. Gawd, what if it starts again?"

"Hush up, Vinnie. A body can't tell who's listenin'."

The telephone rang throughout the morning, and this was the topic of conversation. It was soon borne in upon me that it was the whippoorwills and their frenetic calling in the night which had excited the neighbors. I had thought it annoying, but it had not occurred to me to think it unusual. However, judging by what I overheard, it was not only unusual but ominous for the birds to call with such insistence. It was Hester Hutchins who put the superstitious fears of the neighbors into words, when she told about the whippoorwills to a cousin who had telephoned from Dunwich, some miles to the north.

"The hills was a-talkin' again las' night, Cousin Flora," she said in a kind of hushed but urgent voice. "Heerd 'em all night long, couldn't hardly sleep. Warn't nuthin' but whippoorwills, hunderds an' hunderds of 'em all night long. Come from Harrop's Pocket, but they was so loud they might's well've been on the porch rail. They're a-waitin' to ketch somebody's soul, just the way they was when Benjy Wheeler died an' Sister Hough, an' Curtis Begbie's wife, Annie. I know, I know—they dun't fool me none. Somebody's a-goin' to die—an' soon, mark my words."

A strange superstition, surely, I thought. Nevertheless, that night, following a day too busy to permit of my making inquiries of the neighbors, I set myself to listening for the whippoorwills. I sat in the darkness at the study window, but there was scarcely any need for light, for a moon but three days from the full shone into the valley and filled it with that green-white light which is the peculiar property of moonlight. Long before darkness came into the valley, it had taken possession of the wooded hills enclosing it; and it was from the dark places in the woods that the first steady *whippoorwill* began to sound and recur. Previous to the voices of the whippoorwills there had been strangely few of the customary evening songs of birds; only a few nighthawks had appeared against the evening sky to spiral upward, crying shrilly, and plummet down in a breathtaking sky-coast, making an odd *zoom* at the trough of the dive. But these were no longer visible or audible as darkness fell, and one after another, the whippoorwills began to call.

AS DARKNESS invaded the valley, the whippoorwills did likewise. Undeniably, the whippoorwills drifted down out of the hills on noiseless wings toward the house in which I sat. I saw the first one come, a dark object in the moonlight, to the roof of the woodshed; in a matter of moments, another bird followed, then another and another. Soon I saw them come to the ground between the sheds and the house, and I knew they were on the roof of the house itself. They occupied every roof, every every fence-post. I counted over a hundred of them before I stopped counting, being unsure about their flight-patterns, since I observed some of them moving about from one place to another.

Never once did their calling cease. I used to think that the call of the whippoorwill was a sweetly nostalgic sound, but never again. Surrounding the house, the birds made the most hellish cacophony conceivable; whereas the call of a whippoorwill heard from a distance is mellow and pleasant, the same call heard just outside the window is unbelievably harsh and noisy, a cross between a scream and an angry rattle. Multiplied by scores, the calls were truly maddening, grating on me to such an extent that after an hour of it, following the ordeal of the previous night, I took refuge in cotton stuffed into my ears. Even this afforded but temporary relief, but, with its help and the exhaustion I felt after the sleepless night just past, I was able to sleep after a fashion. My last thought before sleep overcame me was that I must go on about my business without delay, lest I be driven out of my mind by the ceaseless insistence of the whippoorwills which obviously meant to come down out of the hills every night in their season.

I was awake before dawn; the soporific of sleep had worn off, but the whippoorwills had not ceased to call. I sat up on my couch, and presently got up to look out of the window. The birds were still there, though they had moved a little farther away

from the house now, and were no longer quite so numerous. A faint hint of dawn shone in the east, and there, too, taking the place of the moon, which had gone down, shone the morning stars—the planets Mars, already well up the eastern heaven, with Venus and Jupiter, less than five degrees above the eastern rim, and glowing with supernal splendor.

I dressed, made myself some breakfast, and for the first time stopped to look at the books my cousin Abel had gathered together. I had given a cursory glance at the open book on the table, but it meant nothing to me, since it appeared to be printed in a type-face which was an imitation of someone's script, and was therefore scarcely legible. Moreover, it concerned alien matters, which seemed to me the veriest fancies of someone's drug-ridden mind. My cousin's other books, however, appeared to be of similar nature. A file of the *Old Farmer's Almanac* stood out with welcome familiarity, but this alone was familiar. Though I was never a poorly-read man, I confess to a feeling of utter strangeness before my cousin's library, if such it can be called.

YET a cursory examination of it filled me with a new respect for my cousin, for his abilities certainly exceeded my own in the matter of languages, if he had been able to read all the tomes he had collected. For they were in several languages, as their titles indicated, and most of them had no meaning for me at all. I remembered having vaguely heard of the Rev. Ward Phillips' book, *Thaumaturgical Prodigies in the New-English Canaan,* but of such books as the *Cultes des Goules,* by Comte d'Erlette, *De Vermis Mysteriis,* by Dr. Ludvig Prinn, Lully's *Ars Magna et Ultima,* the *Pnakotic Manuscript, the R'lyeh Text,* Von Junzt's *Unaussprechlichen Kulten,* and many other similar titles, I had never heard. It did not occur to me, frankly, that these books might contain a key to my cousin's disappearance, until later that day, when finally I did take time to make some attempt to see the neighbors, for the purpose of making inquiry among them in the hope of accomplishing more than the men from the sheriff's office.

I went first to the Giles place, which was approximately one mile up into the hills directly south of my cousin's house. My reception was not encouraging. Abbey Giles, a tall, gaunt woman, saw me from the window and, shaking her head, refused to come to the door. As I stood in the yard, wondering how I could convince her that I was not dangerous, Lem Giles came hurriedly from the barn; the belligerence of his gaze gave me pause.

"What're ye wantin' here, Stranger?" he asked.

THOUGH he called me "Stranger," I felt that he knew me perfectly well. I introduced myself and explained that I was endeavoring to learn the truth about my cousin's disappearance. Could he tell me anything about Abel?

"Can't tell ye nuthin', he said shortly. "Go ast the sheriff; I tol' him everythin' I got to say."

"I think people hereabouts know more than they are saying," I said firmly.

"Might be. But they ain't sayin' it, and that's a fact."

More than this I could not get out of Lem Giles. I went on to the Corey place, but no one was at home there; so I took a ridge path I was confident would lead me to the Hutchins place, as it did. But before I could get to the house, I was seen from one of the hill fields, someone hailed me, and I found myself confronting a barrel-chested man half a head taller than myself, who demanded truculently to know where I was going.

"I'm on my way to Hutchins," I said.

"No need your goin', then," he said. "They ain't to home. I work for 'em. Name's Amos Whateley."

But I had spoken to Amos Whateley before; I recognized his voice as that of the man who had early this morning told me to "git aout o' here as fast as ye c'n git!" I looked at him for a minute in silence.

"I'm Dan Harrop," I said finally. "I came up here to find out what happened to my cousin Abel, and I mean to find out."

I could see that he had known who I was. He stood considering me for a moment before he spoke. "An' if ye find aout, ye'll go?"

"I have no other reason for staying."

He seemed indecisive, still, as if he did

not trust me. "Ye'll sell the hapuse?" he wanted to know.

"I can't use it."

"I'll tell ye then," he said with abrupt decision. "Yer cousin, him as was Abel Harrop, was took off by Them from Aoutside. He called 'em an' They come." He paused as suddenly as he had begun to speak, his dark eyes searching my face. "Ye dun't believe," he cried. "Ye dun't know!"

"Know what?" I asked.

"Abaout Them from Aoutside." He looked distressed. "I hadn't to a tol' ye, then. Ye'll pay no mind to me."

I tried to be patient, and explained once more that I wanted only to know what had happened to Abel.

But he was no longer interested in my cousin's fate. Still searching my face keenly, he demanded, "The books! Hev ye read the books?"

I shook my head.

"I tell ye to burn 'em—burn 'em all, afore it's too late!" He spoke with almost fanatic insistence. "I know whut's in 'em, summat."

It was this strange adjuration which ultimately sent me to the books my cousin had left.

THAT evening I sat down at the table where my cousin must so often have sat, by the light of the same lamp, with the chorus of whippoorwills already rising outside, to look with greater care at the book my cousin had been reading. I discovered almost at once, to my astonishment, that the print which I had mistaken for an old imitation of script was indeed script, and I had, further, the uncomfortable conviction that the manuscript, which had no title, was bound in human skin. Certainly it was very old, and it had the appearance of having been put together of scattered sheets of paper, on which its compiler had copied sentences and pages from books not his to own. Some of it was in Latin, some in French, some in English; though the writer's script was too execrable to permit any assurance in reading the Latin or French, I could make out the English after some study.

Most of it was plainly gibberish, but there were two pages which my cousin—or some previous reader—had marked in red crayon, and these I deemed must have been of some signal importance to Abel. I set about to make some sort of clarity out of the crabbed script. The first of them was fortunately short.

> To summon Yogge-Sothothe from the Outside, be wise to wait upon the Sun in the Fifth House, when Saturn is in trine; draw the pentagram of fire, and speak the Ninth Verse thrice, repeating which each Roodemas and Hallow's Eve causeth the Thing to breed in the Outside Spaces beyond the gate, of which Yogge-Sothothe is the Guardian. The once will not bring Him, but may bring Another Who is likewise desirous of growth, and if He have not the blood of Another, He may seek thine own. Therefore be not unwise in these things.

To this my cousin had written a postscript: *"Cf.* page 77 in *Text."*

Putting aside this reference, I turned to the other marked page, but no matter how carefully I read it, I could not make out of it anything but a highly fanciful rigamarole evidently copied faithfully from a far older manuscript—

> Concern'g *ye* Old Ones, 'tis writ, they wait ev'r at *ye* Gate, & *ye* Gate is all places at all times, for They know noth'g of time or place but are in all time & in all place togeth'r without appear'g to be, & there are those amongst Them which can assume divers Shapes & Featurs & any giv'n Shape & any giv'n Face & *ye* Gates are for Them ev'rywhere, but *ye* 1st. was that which I caus'd to be op'd, Namely, in Irem, *ye* City of Pillars, *ye* City under *ye* Desert, but wher'r men sayeth *ye* forbidd'n Words, they shall cause there a Gate to be establish'd & shall wait upon Them Who Come through *ye* Gate, ev'n as *ye* Dhols, & *ye* Abomin. Mi-Go, & *ye* Tcho-Tcho peop., & *ye* Deep Ones, & *ye* Gugs, & *ye* Gaunts of *ye* Night & *ye* Shoggoths & *ye* Voormis, & *ye* Shantaks which guard Kadath in *ye* Colde Waste & *ye* Plateau Leng. All are alike *ye* Children of *ye* Elder Gods, but *ye* Great Race of Yith & *ye* Gr. Old Ones fail'g to agree, one with

another, & boath with *ye* Elder Gods, separat'd, leav'g *ye* Gr. Old Ones in possession of ye Earth, while *ye* Great Race, return'g from Yith took up Their Abode forward in Time in Earth-Land not yet known to those who walk *ye* Earth today, & there wait till there shall come again *ye* winds & *ye* Voices which drove Them forth before & That which Walketh on *ye* Winds over *ye* Earth & in *ye* spaces that are among *ye* Stars forev'r.

I read this with amazement and wonder, but, since it meant nothing to me, I returned to the original marked page and attempted to puzzle meaning out of that. I could not, save that I had an uneasy memory of Amos Whateley's reference to "Them Outside." I guessed, finally, that my cousin's appended note referred to the *R'lyeh Text;* so I took up this slender volume and looked to the indicated page.

My language-study was unfortunately not thorough enough to read the page with any sure meaning, but it appeared to be a formula or chant summoning some ancient being in which some primitive peoples had evidently once believed. I went through it uncertainly in silence; then I read it slowly aloud, but it seemed to have no greater meaning audibly, except only as a curious aspect of ancient religious credos, for to such facets of existence I deemed it was related.

By the time I rose wearily from the books, the whippoorwills had once again taken possession of the valley. I put out the light and looked into the moonlit darkness beyond the house. The birds were there, as before; they made dark shadows on the grass, on the roofs. In the moonlight they had a strange appearance of being uncannily distorted, and they were certainly abnormally large birds. I had thought of whippoorwills as not more than ten inches in length, but these birds were easily twelve and fourteen inches long, and of an equivalent thickness, so that they appeared singularly large. Doubtless, however, this was due to some trick of moonlight and shadow, acting upon a tired and already over-burdened imagination. But there was no gainsaying the fact that the vehemence and loudness of their calls was in ratio to their apparently abnormal size. There was considerably less movement among them that night, however, and I had the uneasy conviction that they sat there calling as if calling *to* someone or something or as if *waiting* for something to happen, so that Hester Hutchins' hushed urgent voice came back to mind with disturbing persistence, "They're a-waitin' to ketch somebody's soul. . . ."

II

THE strange events which subsequently took place at my cousin's house date from that night. Whatever it was that set it in motion, some malign force seemed to possess the entire valley. Sometime during that night I woke, convinced that something more than the ceaseless storming of the whippoorwills gave voice in the moonlit dark. I lay listening, almost instantly wide awake, listening for whatever it was, listening until the endless *whippoorwill* screamed from a thousand throats seemed to mark the very pulsing of my blood, the throbbing of the spheres!

Then I heard it—and listened—and doubted the evidence of my own ears.

A kind of chanting, rising momentarily to ululation, but certainly in a tongue I did not know. Even now I cannot describe it with any adequacy. Perhaps, if one could imagine turning on several radio stations at once and listening to alien languages pouring forth from each one, hopelessly jumbled, it might establish a sort of parallel. Yet, there seemed to be a kind of pattern, and, try as I might, I could not disabuse myself of this notion. The gibberish I heard mingled uncannily with the crying of the whippoorwills. It reminded me of a litany, with the priest leading the recitative, and the audience murmuring in answer. The sound came intermittently, an odd predominance of consonants with but an occasional vowel. The most intelligible sounds, which seemed to be repeated, were these:

"Llllll-nglui, nnnnn-lagl, fhtagn-ngah, ai Yog-Sothoth!"

These were given voice in a crescendo of sound, bursting explosively at the last syllables, to which the whippoorwills responded in rhythmic song. It was not that

they ceased crying, but only that when the other sounds came, the calling of the whippoorwills receded and faded as if into distance, then rushed forward and swelled out triumphantly in answer to the sounds in the night.

Strange and terrible as these sounds were, however, their source was even more frightening, for they came from somewhere within the house—either from the rooms above or from those below; and, with each moment that I listened, I became more and more convinced that the hideous gibberish I heard arose from somewhere within the room where I lay. It was as if the very walls pulsed with the sound, as if the entire house throbbed with this incredible mouthing, as if, indeed, my very being took part in this horror-fraught litany—not passively, but actively, even joyously!

How long I lay there virtually in a cataleptic state, I do not know. But eventually the invading sounds ceased; I was briefly aware of what seemed to be earth-shaking steps moving off into the heavens accompanied by a vast fluttering, as of whippoorwills rising from the roofs and the surrounding earth; then I fell into a deep sleep from which I did not awaken until mid-day.

I rose with alacrity then, for I meant to pursue my inquiry among my other neighbors with as much dispatch as possible. But I had intended, too, to look further into my cousin's books; yet that noon, when I came into the study and approached the table, I closed the book he had been reading and threw it carelessly to one side. I did this in full awareness of what I was doing, and yet with the intention of reading in it as much as I could. But there was something else lurking on the edge of my consciousness, a stubborn, unreasonable assurance that I knew all that was in this book, all that was in the rest of them piled here and there, and more than that, *much more*. And even as I took in this conviction, there seemed to rise up from deep inside me, as if it were from an ancestral memory to which I knew no bridge, a towering of awareness, and there crossed before my mind's eye vast and titanic heights aand illimitable depths, and I saw great, amorphous beings like masses of protoplasmic jelly, thrusting forth tentacle-like appendages, standing on no known earth but on a dark, forbidding ground, devoid of vegetation, struck out gigantically against no known stars. And in the inner ear I heard names chanted and sung—*Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Hastur, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath,* and many more —and I knew these for the Ancient Ones thrust forth by the Elder Gods and waiting now at the Gate to be summoned to their abode on earth as once in aeons past, and all the pomp and glory of serving them was clear to me, and I knew they would come again to wage their battle for the earth and all the peoples of the earth and once more tempt the wrath of the Elder Gods, even as the poor, pitiable wretches of human kind tempted the wrath of their own fates! And I knew, as Abel knew, that their servants are the chosen ones who shall worship them and give them shelter, who shall house them and feed them until the time of their coming again, when the Gate is opened wide, and a thousand lesser Gates are opened to them in all the places of earth!

But this vision came and faded, like a flashing picture on a screen, from what source I could not tell. It was so brief, so momentary, that, when it had passed, the sound of the book's fall to the pile where I had thrown it still echoed in the room. I was shaken, for at one and the same time I knew my vision had no meaning and yet I knew it did have an importance out of all proportion to this house or this valley or even to all the world I knew.

I turned and went out of the house into the noon-day sun, and under its beneficent rays, the dark ordeal passed from me. I looked back to the house; it shone white in the sun, with the shadow of an elm lying upon it. I went then into the southeast, striking off through the long-neglected fields and pastures toward the Whateley house, which lay about a mile away in that direction. Seth Whateley was a younger brother of Amos'; they had quarreled years before, I had been told in Aylesbury, about what, no one knew, and now seldom saw or spoke to each other, despite living but two miles apart. Amos had grown close to the Dunwich Whateleys, who were, said the Aylesbury people, "the decayed branch" of one of the old armigerous families of Massachusettes.

THE majority of the distance lay over the hill, through heavily wooded slopes and into the valley beyond, and quite often I started up whippoorwills, which flew on noiseless wings, circled a little, and settled horizontally on limbs or on the ground, blending wonderfully well with bark or old leaves, gazing at me with their small black eyes. Here and there, too, I saw eggs lying among the leaves. The hills were alive with whippoorwills, but I did not need this evidence to know that. It seemed to me a singular thing, however, that they should be ten times as numerous on the slope facing into Harrop's Valley than on those opposite. But they were. Descending the slope through the aromatic May woods to the valley where the Whateleys lived, I frightened up only one bird, which vanished noiselessly, and did not move away only a little and turn to regard me in passing. I did not think, then, that the curious attention of the whippoorwills on the near slope was frightening.

I was apprehensive about my reception at the Whateley house, and I soon found that I had good reason to be, for I was met by Seth Whateley carrying a gun, and giving me a stony stare from above that weapon.

"Ye got no call to bother us," he challenged as I approached.

Evidently he had just come from dinner, and had been on his way back to the fields when he caught sight of me; he had then retreated into the house and got his gun. Behind him I could see his wife, Emma, and their three children hanging on to her skirts, looking at me with fear plain in their eyes.

"I don't mean to bother you, Mr. Whateley," I said, as reassuringly as I could and with determined effort to suppress the irritation I felt at this unreasoning wall of suspicion which greeted me wherever I turned. "But I do mean to know what happened to my cousin Abel."

He gave me his stony stare briefly before replying. "We dun't know nuthin' We ain't the kind to go pryin' araound. Whut yer cousin was a-doin' was his own business es long es he didn't bother us. Even if there's some things better let alone," he added darkly.

"Somebody must have made away with him, Mr. Whateley."

"He was took. That's whut they say my brother Amos says. He was took, body an soul, an' if a man gits to lookin' where he hadn't oughta, that's whut's a-goin' to happen ev'ry time. No man's hand was raised agin him here—not but what there hadn't oughta hev bin."

"I'm going to find out. . ."

He shifted his gun menacingly. "Ye can't do it here. I tol' you we dun't know nuthin'. An' we dun't. I ain't meanin' no offense, but the woman she's upset as all git-out, an' I don't aim for her to be more turned out; so you git."

However crude Seth Whateley's invitation was, it was effective enough.

But matters were very much the same at Hough's, though there I was very poignantly aware of a greater tension in the atmosphere —not alone fear, but hatred, too. They were more civil, but anxious to be rid of me, and when at last I took my leave, with no word of help from them in my quest, I was convinced that, however they reasoned, the death of Laban Hough's wife was laid at my cousin's door. It was not evident in what was said so much as in what was not said; the charge lay in the unspoken words lurking behind their eyes and tongues. And I knew without needing to think further, but only by remembering how Hester Hutchins had talked to her cousin Flora about the whippoorwills calling for the souls of Benjy Wheeler and Sister Hough and Annie Begbie, that the whippoorwills and my cousin Abel Harrop were linked in the primitive superstition which haunted the waking and sleeping hours of these remote and earthy people; but by what bond these events could be connected, I could not guess. It was patent, moreover, that these people looked upon me with the same fear and dislike—or loathing—as they had looked upon Abel, and, whatever their reason for hating and fearing Abel had been, the same reason clearly applied to me in their limited capacity for thinking. Yet Abel, as I remembered him, had been even more sensitive than I, and, though surly by nature, he had always been essentially gentle, unwilling to hurt anyone, least of all a fellow-animal, human or otherwise. Doubtless their suspicions had taken rise in the well of dark superstition which is always rife in isolated countrysides, ever lurking ready to spark another Salem

terror, and hound to death helpless victims innocent of any crime but knowledge.

IT WAS that night, the night of the full moon, that the horror struck the Pocket.

But before I learned of what happened in the Pocket that night, I went through an ordeal of my own. It began soon after I got home from my last visit that afternoon, to the uncommunicative Osborns, across the hills to the north, after the sun had vanished beyond the western ridge, and I was at a meager supper. I began to have fancies again, and I couldn't get it out of my head that I wasn't alone in that house. So I left my supper and went through it, first downstairs, and then, taking the lamp—for the gable windows upstairs admitted little light—I went up. All the time I thought I could hear someone calling my name, someone calling to me in Abel's voice, the way it used to sound when we were children and played together here at this place, when his folks were living.

I found something in the store-room, something I could not explain. I found it by accident because I saw that one of the panes was out of the window! I had not noticed that before. The room was filled with boxes and a little discarded furniture; it was stacked neatly enough, and in such a way that the most light could still filter into the room from the one window. Seeing the break, I went over to the window, and when I came around the boxes stacked there, I saw that there was a little space between the row of boxes and the window, enough for a chair and a man to sit in it. There was a chair there; there was no man, but there was some clothing that I knew for Abel's, and the way it lay there in the chair was enough to send a chill through me, though I don't know why I was so oddly frightened.

The fact was, the clothes lay there in the most peculiar manner. It was not as if somebody had laid them down like that; I don't think anyone *could* lay clothing just that way. I looked and looked at it, and I could not explain it in any other way but that somebody had been sitting there and just been pulled out of his clothes, as if he had been sucked out, and the clothes just collapsed with nothing inside them. I put the lamp down and touched them; they were not dusty to any extent; so that meant they had not been there long. I wondered if the sheriff's men had seen them, not that they could have made anything more out of them than I had; so I left them there, undisturbed, meaning to notify the sheriff next morning. But what with one thing and another, and everything that happened in the Pocket after that, I forgot about it; so the clothes are still there, sort of fallen together on the chair, just as I found them that night of the May full moon before the window in the store-room. And I set it down here and now, because it is evidence of what I claim, to stand against the terrible doubts that greet me on all sides.

That night the whippoorwills called with maddening insistence.

I heard them first while I was still in the store-room; they had begun to call out of the darkly wooded slope from which the sunlight had gone, but far down the west, the sun had not yet set, and, though the Pocket was already in a kind of blue-hazed twilight, the sun still shone outside it, on the road connecting Arkham and Aylesbury. It was early for the whippoorwills, very early, earlier than they had ever called before. Irritated as I was already, by the stupid superstitious fear which had repelled every advance I made during the day, I knew I could not stand yet another night of sleeplessness.

But soon the cries and calls were everywhere. *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!* Nothing but that monotonous screaming and screeching, the constant *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!* It pressed down from the hills into the valley, it crowded out of the moonlit night where the birds surrounded the house in a vast circle until it seemed that the house itself echoed their cries in a voice of its own, as if every joist and beam, every nail and stone, every board and shingle answered the thunder from outside, the horrible, the maddening *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!* rising in a cacophonous chorus which invaded aand tore every fibre of my being. They made a wave of sound beating against the house, against the hills, once again as if they took part in some eldritch litany, and every cell in my body cried out in anguish at their noisome triumph.

IT WAS about eight o'clock that evening when I knew I must do something. I had not brought any kind of weapon with me, and my cousin's shotgun had been impounded by the sheriff and was still being held in the courthouse at Aylesbury; but I had found a stout cudgel under the couch where I slept—evidently my cousin's, to be kept at hand in case he was awakened suddenly in the night—and I meant to go out and kill as many of the whippoorwills as I could, in the hope that this would drive them away for good. I did not intend to go far; so I left the lamp burning in the study.

At my first step outside the door, the whippoorwills fluttered up, fanning out and away from me. But all my pent-up irritation and wrath burst forth; I ran in among them, swinging wildly, while they fluttered noiselessly up all about me, some of them silent now, but most of them still singing horribly. I pursued them out of the yard, up the road, into the woods, down across the road, back into the woods; I ran far, but how far I do not know, and I know that I killed many of them before I stumbled back to the house at last, exhausted, with only enough energy left to put out the lamp in the study, which had burned very low, and fall upon my couch. Before the distant whippoorwills which had escaped me could converge upon the house again, I was deep in slumber.

Because I do not know what time it was when I came in, I cannot say how long I slept before the ringing of the telephone woke me. Though the sun was already up, the hour was but five-thirty. As was now my habit, I went out into the kitchen, where the telephone was, and took down the receiver. That was how I learned about the coming of the horror.

"Mis' Wheeler, this 's Emma Whateley. You heerd the news?"

"No, Mis' Whateley, ain't heerd a thing."

"Gawd! it's awful. It's Bert Giles. He's bin kilt. They found him jest abaout midnight that whar the road goes acrost Giles' brook, near to the bridge. 'Twas Lute Corey found him, an' they say he let out a yell that woke Lem Giles up, an' the minute Lem heerd Lute hollerin', he knowed, he knowed all right. His ma begged Bert not to go to Arkham, but he was baound an' determined to go, you know haow set all them Gileses is. 'Pears he was a-goin' in with them Baxter men works Osborn's farm, summat under three mile from Gileses, an' he set out to walk to their place so's he could ride with 'em. Wa'n't no sign o' what kilt him, but Seth, who was daown come sunup this mornin' he says the graound's all tore up, like as if that was a fight. An' he seen poor Bert, or what was left o' him. Gawd! Seth said his throat was all tore out an' his wrists tore open and his clothes jest abaout to shreds! An' that ain't all, even if 't is the worst. While Seth was a-standin' thar, Curtis Begbie he come runnin' up an' he said four o' Corey's cows they had night pasturin' in thet south forty was kilt, too, an' all tore up—jest like poor Bert!"

"Gawd!" whimpered Mrs. Wheeler, frightened. "Who will it be the next?"

"Sheriff says 'pears to be some wild animal, but that hain't no tracks they could see. They bin workin' all araound ever since they got the word, an' Seth he says they hain't faound aout much."

"Oh, it's wuss'n when Abel was here."

"I allus said Abel wasn't the worst. I knowed. I knowed some of Seth's kin-folk—thet Wilbur an' ol' Whateley—an' they're a sight worse'n a feller like Abel Harrop was. I knowed it, Mis' Wheeler. An' thar's others at Dunwich, too—the Whateleys ain't the only ones."

"It ain't Abel. . . ."

"An' Seth, he says durin' that time he was a-standin' thar lookin' at poor Bert Giles, Amos come up, Amos that ain't said ten words to Seth in ten years, an' he jest took one look an' he kind o' muttered to hisself an' Seth says he said, 'Thet dam' fool spoke the words!' jest like that, an' Seth, he turns to him an' he says, 'What's thet you're sayin', Amos?' An' Amos he looks at him an' he says, 'Ain't nothin' es bad es a fool whut don't know whut he's got!' "

"Thet Amos Whately allus was a bad one, Mis' Whateley, an' that's a fact an' it don't make no difference you're related, it's jest the same."

"Ain't nobody knows it better'n I do, Mis' Wheeler."

By this time other women had joined the conversation, identifying themselves. Mrs. Osborn came on the wire to say that the

Baxters, tiring of waiting, and thinking that Bert had changed his mind, had gone on to Arkham. They had come back about eleven-thirty. Hester Hutchins predicted that this was "only the beginnin'. Amos said it." Vinnie Hough cried hysterically that she was of a mind to take the children, her niece and nephew, and flee to Boston until the devil "took his stand somewhere's else." It was only when Hester Hutchins began to tell the rest of them, wildly, that Jesse Trumbull had come in and reported that all the blood had been sucked out of Bert Giles' body and also out of the four Corey cows that I hung up; I could recognize the beginning of the legend and the working of superstition beginning to be constructed on the few pertinent facts.

THROUGHOUT the day there were various reports. At noon the sheriff stopped in perfunctorily to inquire whether I had heard anything in the night, but I replied that I was incapable of hearing anything but whippoorwills. Since everyone else to whom he had talked mentioned having heard the whippoorwills, he was not surprised. He volunteered the information that Jethro Corey had awakened in the night and had heard the cows bellowing, but before he could get dressed to go down they had stopped; so he had assumed they had been disturbed by some animal passing through the pasture—the hills abounded in fox and raccoon—and had gone back to bed. Mamie Whateley had heard someone scream; she was sure that it was Bert, but, since she reported it only after having heard all the details of the killing, it was thought that this was only an imaginative afterthought, a pathetic attempt to focus a little attention on herself. After the sheriff had gone, one of his deputies stopped in, too, plainly worried, because their failure to solve the mystery of my cousin's disappearance was already a blot on their record, and this new crime might well bring them further criticism. Apart from these visits and the steady ringing of the telephone, I was not disturbed throughout the day, and I managed to get a little sleep in anticipation of the night's infesting whippoorwills.

Yet that night, curiously, the whippoorwills, for all their damnable calling, did me a good turn. I had gone to sleep, surprisingly, despite their cacophonous cries, and had slept perhaps two hours, when I was awakened. I thought at first that dawn had come, but it had not, and then I realized that what had awakened me was the absence of the whippoorwills' voices; their sudden cessation and the succeeding silence had startled me from my sleep. This curious and unprecedented occurrence fully aroused me; I got up, pulled on my trousers, and went to the window to look out.

I saw a man running from the yard—a big man. I thought at once of what had happened to Albert Giles the night before, and a momentary fear took possession of me, for a big man could perhaps have wreaked the night's havoc, a big man and a homicidal maniac—but then I knew that there was only one man so big in all the valley, and that was Amos Whateley. And the direction in which he was vanishing in the moonlight was that of the Hutchins place, where he worked. My impulse to set out after him, to shout at him, was halted by what I then saw out of the corner of my eyes—a sudden, fitful orange glow. I threw up the window and craned out. Down along one corner the house was burning!

Because I acted without delay, and because a bucket of water already stood under the pump, I was able to put the fire out without the burning of more than a square foot or two of siding and some further charring.

But it was clear that the fire had been set, and undoubtedly by Amos Whateley, and, had it not been for the whippoorwills' strange silence, I might have perished in the holocaust. As it was, I was badly shaken, for if my neighbors bore me such ill-feeling as to take such measures to drive me from my cousin's house, what might I still expect of them? Yet, opposition has always strengthened me; and after a few moments, it was again true. I felt convinced anew that if my search for the facts behind my cousin's disappearance alarmed them to such a degree as this, then I was on the right track in believing that they knew far more about it than any of them was willing to tell. So I went back to bed determined to face Amos Whateley next day, when I could find him somewhere in the fields, away from the

Hutchins house, and we could talk without being overheard.

Accordingly, in mid-morning I sought out Amos Whateley. He was at work in the same hilltop field where he had worked when first I saw him, but this time he did not come to confront me; instead, he stopped the horses and stood watching me. I saw, as I came up toward the stone fence there that his bearded face held both apprehension and defiance. He stood unmoving, save that he pushed his crumpled felt hat further back on his head; his lips were pressed together in a firm, unyielding line, but his eyes were wary. Since he was not far from the fence, I stopped where I was, along the woods' edge.

"Whateley, I saw you set fire to my house last night," I said. "Why?"

There was no answer.

"Come, come—I came up here to talk to you. I could just as easily go into Aylesbury and talk to the sheriff."

"Ye read the books," he spat forth hoarsely. "I tol' ye not tew. Ye read that place aout laoud; I know ye did. Ye opened the Gate, an' Them from Aoutside kin come. Wa'n't like yer cousin—he called 'em an' They come—but he didn't do what They wanted; so They took him. But ye didn't know, ye didn't larn how tew, an' They're a-settin' right this minute in this valley an' nobody knows what'll happen next."

IT took me a few minutes to make sense out of this rigmarole, and even then it was only a sort of sense, not logical, by any means. Amos apparently meant to suggest that by reading aloud a passage from the book my cousin had been reading, I had invited some force or being from "outside" into the valley—doubtless an integral part of the natives' absurd superstitions.

"I haven't seen any strangers about," I said curtly.

"Ye dun't allus *see* 'em. Cousin Wilbur says They kin take any shape They like an' They kin git inside ye an'. They kin eat through yer mouth an' see through yer eyes, an' if ye hain't got the pertection, They kin take ye the way They took yer cousin. Ye dun't see 'em," he went on, his voice ris-

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ing now to almost a scream, "because they're inside ye this minute."

I waited for his hysteria to diminish a little. "And what do They eat?" I asked quietly.

"Ye know!" he cried vehemently. "Blood an' sperit—blood to make 'em grow, sperit to make 'em wise to human-kind. Laugh, if ye wants tew, but ye ought tew know. Them 'hippoor'lls knows, all right—thet's why they're allus a-singin' an' a-callin' daown by yer place."

I could not help smiling, though his earnestness was not to be questioned and forestalled the laughter he had thought was coming.

"But that doesn't explain why you should try to burn my house down—and me, too, for all I know."

"I didn't mean ye no harm, but I wanted for ye to git. If ye hain't got no house, ye can't stay."

"And do you represent the opinion of all the others?"

"I know the most," he said, with a faint pride showing through his defiant apprehension. "My Grampaw hed the books, an' he tol' me lots, an' Cousin Wilbur, he knowed, too, an' I know thar's lots o' things the rest dun't know abaout whut goes on aout thar—" he waved one arm toward the heavens—"or daown thar"—he pointed underfoot—"an' lots they needn't to know, less'n it'd scare 'em. An' only haff-knowin' it 's wuss'n nuthin' a-tall. Ye should-a burnt them books, Mr. Harrop—I tol' ye. It's too late naow."

I searched his face in vain for any sign to show that he was not serious; he was wholly sincere, even a little regretful, as if he were sorry he had to consign me to whatever nameless fate he foresaw. For a moment I was uncertain as to how to deal with him. One cannot simply overlook an attempt to burn one's house down, and, for all I knew, one's self with it.

"Very well, Amos. Whatever it is you know is your affair. But I know you set fire to my house, and I can't overlook that. I'll expect you to make that right. When you have the time, you can come down and repair it; if you do that, I'll not report you to the sheriff."

"Nuthin' else either?"

"What else?"

"If ye dun't know—" He shrugged. "I'll come soon's I'm able."

However ridiculous his rigmarole had been, what he said did disconcert me, largely because there was a wild kind of logic to it. But then, I reflected, as I walked back through the woods to my cousin's house, there is a perverted kind of logic to all superstition, which explains the tenacity of superstitions from one generation to another. Yet there had also been unmistakable fear in Amos Whateley, a fear unaccountable except by superstition, for Whateley was a powerful man who could in all probability have tossed me over the stone fence that separated us, with a heave of one arm. And in Whateley's attitude lay the undeniable germ of something profundly disturbing, if only I could have access to the key.

III

I COME now to that portion of my account which must remain unfortunately obscure, for I cannot always be sure of the precise order or meaning of the events in which I took part. Disturbed as I was by Whateley's rigmarole of superstitious fear, I went directly back to my cousin's house and turned to the strange old books which constituted his library. I sought some further clue to Whateley's curious beliefs, and yet, I had no sooner picked up one of the books than I was once again filled with the unshakable conviction that this search was futile, for what does it gain a man to read that which he already knows? And what they think who know nothing of these things—what do they matter? For it seemed as if I saw again that strange landscape with its titanic amorphous beings, and it was as if I heard again the chanting of alien names, hinting of terrible power, a chanting accompanied by a fluting of music, and a choral ululation from throats which were not human.

This illusion lasted but momentarily, only long enough to deflect me from my purpose. I abandoned any further examination of my cousin's books, and after a light lunch I made another attempt to pursue my inquiry into my cousin's disappearance, with such lack of success that I gave it up in mid-

afternoon and returned to the house in an indecisive frame of mind, no longer so certain that the men from the sheriff's office had not done all in their power to trace Abel. And, though my resolve was not diminished, I began for the first time to have grave doubts of my ability to carry on.

That night I heard strange voices once again.

Or perhaps I should not say "strange," for I had heard them before; they were unidentifiable and alien, and once again their source was a mystery to me. But that night the whippoorwills were louder than ever before; their cries rang piercingly in the house and in the Pocket outside. The voices began, I should judge, at about nine o'clock. It was a cloudy night, with great grey banks pressing close upon the hills and the valley, and the air was moist; its very moisture, however, increased the loudness of the whippoorwills and intensified the strange voices which welled forth suddenly, without preamble, as once before—outré, unintelligible, eldritch—they were all that and more, defying description. And once again there was the effect as of a litany, with the chorus of whippoorwills swelling forth as if in answer to every chanted sentence or phrase, an unbearable cacophony of noise that rose to frightful cataclysms of sound.

FOR a while I strove to make something out of the alien voices which throbbed in the room, but they were not coherent, they had the sound of gibberish, despite my inmost conviction that, far from gibberish, they were significant and ominous, beautiful and terrible, suggestive and fraught with meaning far beyond my ability to grasp. Nor did I any longer much care from whence they came; I knew that they rose from somewhere within the house, but whether by virtue of some natural phenomenon or by other agency, I could not determine. They were the product of darkness, or—and I could not gainsay the possibility—they might well have arisen in a consciousness deeply disturbed by the demoniac crying of the whippoorwills, making their terrible bedlam on all sides, filling valley and house and mind with nothing but the constant, shrilling *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!*

I lay in a state akin to catalepsy, listening.

"Llllll-nglui, uunn-lagl, fhtagn-ngah, at Yog-Sothoth!"

The whippoorwills answered in a rolling crescendo of sound that flowed upon the house, broke against it, invaded it; and in the recession of voices, the echo came back from the hills, crashing upon my consciousness with only slightly diminished force.

"Ygnaiih! Y'bthnk. EEE-ya-ya-ya-yahaaahaahaahaaa!"

And again the explosion of sound, the incessant *Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!* beating upon the night and the cloudy darkness like the throbbing of thousands upon thousands of wild drums!

Mercifully, I lost consciousness.

The human body and mind can tolerate only so much before oblivion comes, and with oblivion that night came a dream-structure of unutterable power and terror. I dreamed I was in a far place, a place of vast monolithic buildings, inhabited not by men, but by beings apart from the wildest imagination of men, a land of great unknown tree ferns, of Calamites and Sigillaria surrounding the fantastic buildings of that place, of fearsome forests of trees and other growths belonging to no known terrestrial place. Here and there rose colossi of black stone, deep in places where perpetual twilight held sway, and in some areas there were basaltic ruins of incredible age. And in such night-held places, the constellations which shone forth resembled no known map of the heavens I had ever seen, nor did the topography of the land in those places bear any resemblance to anything I had known, save only certain artists' conceptions of earth in pre-historic times dating far beyond the Paleozoic period.

Of the beings who inhabited the dream I remember only that they were of no fixed shape, gigantic in size, and possessed of appendages which were in the nature of tentacles, but afforded locomotion as well as the power to grasp and hold objects; and these appendages were capable of being retracted in one place and of coming forth in another. They were the inhabitants of the monolithic buildings, and many of them were inert in sleep, at which they were attended by foetal beings considerably smaller in size, but of related structure in that they

too were capable of changing shape. They were of a horrible, fungoid color, not flesh-colored at all; in this they resembled the color of many of the buildings, and at times they appeared to alter horribly in shape, as if in caricature of the curvilinear types of masonry so prevalent in various parts of that dream-world.

Strangely, the chanting and the crying of the whippoorwills continued as an integral part of the dream, but in perspective, rising and falling in the background, as in the distance. And it seemed, moreover, as if I, too, existed in that strange place, but on a different plane, as if I, too, served one of the Great ones there, going forth into the fearsome darkness of the alien forests to slaughter beasts and open their veins so that the Great Ones might feed and grow in other dimensions but that of their weird world.

How long the dream lasted, I could not say. I slept all night, and yet was tired out of all proportion when I woke, as if I had worked most of the night and got but little sleep. I dragged myself wearily to the kitchen and fried myself some bacon and eggs, after which I sat listlessly to eat them. However, black coffee gave me new life, and I rose from the table feeling refreshed.

While I was outside for wood, the telephone rang. It was Hough's ring, but I hurried in to listen.

I RECOGNIZED Hester Hutchin's voice at once, having become accustomed to her ever-wagging tongue. "An' they do say es thar was six, seven kilt. The bes' caows in his herd, Mr. Osborn said. They was up in thet south forty—thet's his nearest pasture to Harrop's Pocket. Gawd knows haow many others would o' bin kilt if twa'n't fer the rest o' the hérd bustin' down the fence an' gittin' daown to the barn. Thet's haow come Osborn's hired man, Andy Baxter, went up to the pasture with a lantern an' seen 'em. Jest like them Corey caows, an' poor Bert Giles—throats all tore out, an' them poor beasts beat up suthin' turrible! Gawd knows what's loose in the Pocket, Vinnie, but suthin's got to be done or we'll all be kilt. I knowed them whippoorwills was a-callin' for somebody's soul, an' they got poor Bert's. They're still a-callin' an' I know whut thet means, an' you do, too, Vinnie Hough—they's to be more souls a-comin' to them whippoorwills afore the moon changes onct more."

"Gawd-a-mercy! I'm goin' straight to Boston, soon's I kin git away."

I knew the sheriff would stop in again that day, and I was ready for him when he came. I had heard nothing. I explained that I had been exhausted the night before but had managed to sleep in spite of the din made by the whippoorwills. In turn, he very considerately told me what had been done to Osborn's cows. Seven of them had been slaughtered, he said, and there was something very strange about it, for no cow had bled very much, despite the way in which each throat was ripped. And, in spite of the bestial manner of the attack, it seemed plain that it had been done by a man, for there were fragmentary footprints in evidence, unfortunately not complete enough to warrant attempting to make any kind of observation. However, he went on in confidence, one of his men had had his eye on Amos Whateley for some time; Amos had been making very queer remarks, and his actions had been those of a man who expected that he was being followed or something. The sheriff said this wearily, for he was tired, having been up since he had been called to Osborn's farm. And what did I know about Whateley? he went on.

I shook my head and confessed that I knew all too little about any of my neighbors. "But I've noticed his queer talk," I admitted. "Whenever I've talked with him, he's said very strange things."

The sheriff leaned forward eagerly. "Did he ever talk or mutter about 'feeding' someone something?"

I admitted that Amos had so talked.

My exhaustion did not leave me during the day, and I did little work, though I found it necessary to wash some of my clothing which had somehow become rust-stained. I took time, too, to examine my cousin's work on the fish-netting, and it occurred to me that he had designed it to catch something. And what more likely than that it was the whippoorwills, which must have driven him, too, to his wits' end now and then? Or perhaps he knew more of their habits than I did, and perhaps he had a bet-

ter reason to try to catch them than their constant crying.

I slept when I could during that day, though from time to time I listened to the current of frightened talk that went on over the telephone. There was no end to it; the telephone rang all day long, and sometimes the men talked to each other, as well as the women, who had heretofore monopolized the wires. They talked about pooling herds of cows and setting a watch on them, but then, fearful, none wanted to watch alone; they spoke of keeping their cows in the barns at night, and I gathered that they had decided to do this. The women, however, wanted no one to go out after dark for any reason whatsoever.

"It dun't come by day," Emma Whateley insisted to Marie Osborn. "Ain't never bin nuthin' done by day. So I say a body should stay close to hum onct the sun gits down over the hills."

And Lavinia Hough had taken off for Boston, just as she said she would, with the children.

"Up an' took them kids an' let Laban be thar," said Hester Hutchins. "But he ain't alone; he's fetched a man out from Arkham to set with him. Oh, it's a turrible thing. It's a Gowd's punishment on us, an' the wusst is nobody knows what It looks like nor whar It comes from 'r nuthin'."

And the superstition about the cows being drained of blood was repeated again.

"They said them caows didn't bleed much, an' that's why—they didn't hev no blood left to bleed," said Angeline Wheeler. "Gawd, whut's a-goin' to happen to us all? We can jest wait till we're all kilt."

This frightened conversation was a sort of whistling in the dark; the telephones gave them, men as well as women, a sense of being less isolated, less solitary. That none of them ever called me I did not ponder; I was an outsider, and people from outside are seldom taken into country circles, like that of my neighbors around Harrop's Pocket in short of ten years' time—if then. Toward evening I no longer listened on the telephone, being still very tired.

On the next night but one of the voices came again.

And the dream came, too. Once more I was in a vast place of strange basalt buildings and fearsome forest growths. And I knew that in that place I was a Chosen One, proud to serve the Ancient Ones, belonging to that greatest of all, who was like the others and yet unlike them, that one among them who alone could take the form of a congeries of shining globes, the Guardian of the Treshold, the Keeper of the Gate, Great Yog-Sothoth, biding his time to return to his one-time terrestrial plane, where I must continue to serve him. Oh, the power and the glory! Oh, the wonder and the terror! Oh, the eternal bliss! And I heard the whippoorwills crying, their voices rising and falling in the background of that place, while the chanters cried out under the alien stars, under the alien heaven, into the gulfs and to the shrouded peaks, cried out aloud—

"Llllll-nglui, nnnn-lagl, fhtagn-ngah, ai Yog-Sothoth!"

And I, too, raised my voice in praise of Him, the Lurker at the Threshold . . .

"Llllll-nglui, nnnn-lagl, fhtagn-ngah, ai Yog-Sothoth!"

That is what they say I was screaming when they found me crouching beside the body of poor Amelia Hutchins, tearing at her throat—the helpless woman struck down on her way back along the ridge path from a visit to Abbey Giles. That is what they say I mouthed in my bestial rage, with the whippoorwills all around, crying and screaming in their maddening voices. And that is why they have locked me into this room with the bars at the window. Oh, the fools! The fools! Having failed once with Abel, they grasp at straws. How can they think to keep one of the Chosen Ones from Them? What are bars to Them?

But they are trying to frighten me when they say I have done these things. I never raised my hand against any human being. I have told them how it was, if only they would see I told them. It was not I, never! No, I know who it was. I think I have always known, and if they look, they will find proof.

It was the whippoorwills, the incessantly calling whippoorwills, the damnable, lurking whippoorwills waiting out there, the whippoorwills, the whippoorwills in the hills. . . .

Fever Dream

A disease that knows how to kill a person and yet live after him

THEY put him between fresh, clean, laundered sheets and there was always a newly squeezed glass of thick orange juice on the table under the dim pink lamp. All Charles had to do was call and Mom or Dad would stick their heads into his room to see how sick he was.

The acoustics in the room were fine; you could hear the toilet gargling its porcelain throat of mornings, you could hear rain tap the roof or sly mice run in the secret walls. If you were very alert, sickness wasn't too bad.

He was fifteen, Charles was. It was mid-

BY RAY BRADBURY

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September, with the land beginning to burn with autumn. He lay in the bed for three days before the terror overtook him.

His hand began to change. His right hand. He looked at it and it was hot and sweating there on the counterpane, alone. It fluttered, it moved a bit. Then it lay there, changing color.

That afternoon the doctor came again and tapped his thin chest like a little drum. "How are you?" asked the doctor, smiling. "I know, don't tell me: ' My *cold* is fine, Doctor; but *I* feel lousy!' Ha!" He laughed at his own oft-repeated joke.

Charles lay there and for him that terrible and ancient jest was becoming a reality. The joke fixed itself in his mind. His mind touched and drew away from it in a pale terror. The doctor did not know how cruel he was with his jokes! "Doctor," whispered Charles, lying flat and colorless. "My *hand*, it doesn't *belong* to me any more. This morning it *changed* into something else. I want you to change it back, Doctor, Doctor!"

The doctor showed his teeth and patted his hand. "It looks fine to me, son. You just had a little fever-dream."

"But, it changed, Doctor, oh, Doctor," cried Charles, pitifully holding up his pale wild hand. "It *did*."

The doctor winked. "I'll give you a pink pill for that." He popped a tablet onto Charles' tongue. "Swallow."

"Will it make my hand change back and become *me*, again!"

"Yes, yes."

THE house was silent when the doctor drove off down the road in his carriage under the quiet, blue September sky. A clock ticked far below in the kitchen world. Charles lay looking at his hand.

It did not change back. It was still—something else.

The wind blew outside. Leaves fell against the cool window.

At four o'clock his other hand changed. It seemed almost to become a fever, a chemical, a virus. It pulsed and shifted, cell by cell. It beat like a warm heart. The fingernails turned blue and then red. It took about an hour for it to change and when it was finished it looked just like any ordinary hand. But it was not ordinary. It no longer was him any more. He lay in a fascinated horror and then fell into an exhausted sleep.

Mother brought the soup up at six. He wouldn't touch it. "I haven't any hands," he said, eyes shut.

"Your hands are perfectly good," said Mother.

"No," he wailed. "My hands are gone. I feel like I have stumps. Oh, Mama, Mama, hold me, hold me, I'm scared!"

She had to feed him herself.

"Mama," he said. "Get the doctor, please again. I'm so sick."

"The doctor'll be here tonight at eight," she said, and went out.

At seven, with night dark and close around the house, Charles was sitting up in bed when he felt the thing happening to first one leg and then the other. "Mama! Come quick!" he screamed.

But when mama came the thing was no longer happening.

When she went downstairs, he simply lay without fighting as his legs beat and beat, grew warm, red hot, and the room filled with the warmth of his feverish change. The glow crept up from his toes to his ankles and then to his knees.

"May I come in?" The doctor smiled in the doorway.

"Doctor!" cried Charles. "Hurry, take off my blankets!"

The doctor lifted the blankets tolerantly. "There you are. Whole and healthy. Sweating, though. A little fever. I told you not to move around, bad boy." He pinched the moist pink cheek. "Did the pills help? Did you hand change back?"

"No, no, now it's my other hand and my legs!"

"Well, well, I'll have to give you three more pills, one for each limb, eh, my little peach?" laughed the doctor.

"Will they help me? Please, please. What've I *got?*"

"A mild case of scarlet fever, complicated by a slight cold."

"Is it a germ that lives and has more little germs in me?"

"Yes."

"Are you *sure* it's scarlet fever? You haven't taken any tests!"

"I guess I know a certain fever when I see one," said the doctor, checking the boy's pulse with cool authority.

Charles lay there, not speaking until the doctor was crisply packing his black kit. Then, in the silent room, the boy's voice made a small, weak pattern, his eyes alight with remembrance. "I read a book once. About petrified trees, wood turning to stone. About how trees fell and rotted and minerals got in and built up and they look just like trees, but they're not, they're stone." He stopped. In the quiet warm room his breathing sounded.

"Well?" asked the doctor.

"I've been thinking," said Charles, after a time. "Do germs ever get big. I mean, in biology class they told us about one-celled animals, amoebas and things, and how, millions of years ago they got together until there was a bunch and they made the first body. And more and more cells got together and got bigger and then finally maybe there was a fish and finally here *we* are, and all we are is a bunch of cells that decided to get together to help each other out. Isn't that right?" Charles wet his feverish lips.

"What's all this about?" the doctor bent over him.

"I've got to tell you this, Doctor, oh, I've got to," he cried. "What would happen, oh just pretend, please pretend, that, just like in the old days, a lot of microbes got together and wanted to make a bunch, and reproduced and made *more*—"

His white hands were on his chest now, crawling toward his throat.

"And they decided to *take over* a person!" cried Charles.

"Take over a person?"

"Yes, *become* a person. Me, my hands, my feet! What if a disease somehow knew how to kill a person and yet live after him?

He screamed.

The hands were on his neck.

The doctor moved forward, shouting.

AT NINE o'clock the doctor was escorted out to his carriage by the mother and father who handed him up his bag. They conversed in the cool night wind for a few minutes. "Just be sure his hands are kept strapped to his legs," said the doctor. "I don't want him hurting himself."

"Will he be all right, Doctor?" The mother held to his arm a moment.

He patted her shoulder. "Haven't I been your family physician for thirty years? It's the fever, he imagines things."

"But those bruises on his throat, he almost choked himself."

"Just you keep him strapped, he'll be all right in the morning."

The horse and carriage moved off down the dark September road.

At three in the morning, Charles was still awake in his small black room. The bed was damp under his head and his back. He was very warm. Now he no longer had any arms or legs, and his body was beginning to change. He did not move on the bed but looked at the vast blank ceiling spaces with insane concentration. For awhile he had screamed and thrashed but now he was weak and hoarse from it, and his mother had gotten up a number of times to soothe his brow with a wet towel. Now he was silent, his hands strapped to his legs.

He felt the walls of his body change, the organs shift, the lungs catch fire like burning bellows of pure alcohol. The room was lighted up as with the flickerings of a hearthplace.

Now he had no body. It was all gone. It was under him but it was filled with a vast pulse of some burning, lethargic drug. It was as if a guillotine had neatly lopped off his head and his head lay shining on a midnight pillow while the body, below, still alive, belonged to somebody else. The disease had eaten his body and from the eating had reproduced itself in feverish duplicate. There were the little hand-hairs and the fingernails and the scars and the toenails and the tiny mole on his right hip, all done again in perfect fashion.

I am dead, he thought. I've been killed, and yet I live. My body is dead, it is all disease and nobody will know. I will walk around and it will not be me, it will be something else. It will be something all bad, all evil, so big and so evil it's hard to understand or think about. Something that will buy shoes and drink water and

get married some day maybe and do more evil in the world than has ever been done.

Now the warmth was stealing up his neck, into his cheeks, like a hot wine. His lips burned, his eyelids, like leafs, caught fire. His nostrils breathed out blue flame, faintly, faintly.

This will be all, he thought. It'll take my head and my brain and fix each eye and every tooth and all the marks in my brain, and every hair and every wrinkle in my ears, and there'll be nothing left of me.

He felt his brain fill with a boiling mercury. He felt his left eye clench in upon itself and, like a snail, withdraw, shift. He was blind in his left eye. It no longer belonged to him. It was enemy territory. His tongue was gone, cut out. His left cheek was numbed, lost. His left ear stopped hearing. It belonged to someone else now. This thing that was being born, this mineral thing replacing the wooden log, this disease replacing healthy animal cell.

He tried to scream and he was able to scream loud and high and sharply in the room, just as his brain flooded down, his right eye and right ear were cut out, he was blind and deaf, all fire, all terror, all panic, all death.

His scream stopped before his mother ran through the door to his side.

IT WAS a good, clear morning with a brisk wind that helped carry doctor, horse and carriage along the road to halt before the house. In the window above, the boy stood, fully dressed. He did not wave when the doctor waved and called, "What's this? Up? My God!"

The doctor almost ran upstairs. He came gasping into the bedroom.

"What are you doing out of bed?" he demanded of the boy. He tapped his thin chest, took his pulse and temperature. "Absolutely amazing! Normal! Normal, by God!"

"*I* shall never be sick again in my life," declared the boy, quietly, standing there, looking out the wide window. "Never."

"I hope not. Why, you're looking fine, Charles!"

"Doctor?"

"Yes, Charles?"

"Can I go to school *now?*" asked Charles.

"Tomorrow will be time enough. You sound positively eager."

"I am. I like school. All the kids. I want to play with them and wrestle with them and spit on them and play with the girls pigtails and shake the teachers' hands and rub my hands on all the cloaks in the cloakroom, and I want to grow up and travel and shake hands with people all over the world and be married and have lots of children and go to libraries and handle books and—*all* of that I want to!" said the boy, looking off into the September morning. "What's the name you called me?"

"What?" The doctor puzzled. "I called you nothing but Charles."

"It's better than no name at all, I guess." Charles shrugged.

"I'm glad you want to go back to school," said the doctor.

"I really anticipate it," smiled the boy. "Thank you for your help, doctor. Shake hands?"

"Glad to." They shook hands gravely and the clear wind blew through the open window. They shook hands for almost a minute, Charles smiling up at the old man and thanking him.

Laughing, Charles raced him downstairs and out to his carriage, where father and mother joined him for the happy farewell. And while the doctor was telling his parents that Charles was "fit as a fiddle," the boy reached over with his left hand and barely touched a number of red ants that were racing wildly about the floorboard of the carriage. From the corners of his shining eyes, while Dad joked with the doctor, Charles saw the ants hesitate, quiver, and lie still on the floorboard. They were dead.

"Goodbye!" The doctor drove off.

"School days, school days, dear old golden rule days," sang Charles, running back to the house.

The parents beamed. "It's good to have him well again. He's *so* looking forward to school!"

Charles condescended to giving them both a big hug and kiss.

"I love you," he said.

The Cracks of Time

BY DOROTHY QUICK

Time is all around us this minute and the next simultaneously

IT WAS when the cocktail party I was giving for Myra was at its height that I first saw the face.

I had been listening to the one hundred and fourth "But my dear, your engagement was such a surprise—You know you have all my best wishes—Now I want to congratulate the lucky man," and wondering how Myra ever found the right words to reply. Marveling, too, at the ease with which she did so, and passed the people on to Henley, who managed them equally well.

Heading by Boris Dulgov

They were a good pair, my younger sister Myra and Henley Bradford. They'd have a happy marriage.

It was to hide the rush of tears to my eyes that I looked down, and saw the face. The sun room's floor was done with tiles Jason and I had brought from Spain while on our honeymoon—when we had been happy. They were a sea green-blue, some with geometric designs, some perfectly plain, their only ornamentation the patina of the glazing and the dark lines, or cracks, which time had given them. In this particular tile that caught my eyes the cracks had patterned a face. It was only a vague outline, the profile of a man with full, thick lips—sensuous lips, slanted eyes, and a forehead from which the hair rose up into a point that looked like a horn. There was nothing more that was definite. The rest was blurred and vague, like some modern, impressionistic picture, of the shadowy school which suggests its subject, rather than portrays it.

I was about to call out and tell the crowd what I'd discovered. I thought I'd make a game of it, because, in a way, it was like "statues," or finding shapes in clouds. The words "See what I've found!" were actually on my lips when the eye of the face looked a warning from under its slanting lid, and then the lid came down, covering the eye.

IT was a trick of lighting, of course. The fact was in profile and the eye was open. The shadow of someone's foot in passing must have made the effect of the lid closing. The eye looking at me in warning was imagination plus several cocktails. But what I had been going to say was still-born. I didn't mention the profile but kept looking at it as the afternoon progressed, and it seemed to me that the face became clearer and more sharply etched. I began thinking it resembled the ancient sculptures of Pan.

By the time the guests had drunk themselves into a state of hilarity I had forgotten the face. I didn't notice it again until Jason came over to me and, in a rare mood of affection, put his arm around my shoulder. "Sheila," he whispered in a voice liquor had thickened, "you're the best-looking girl here. Why don't we kiss and make up?"

I knew he wouldn't have said that, sober. I also knew that our quarreling had gone beyond the point where we could follow his suggestion. Jason's charms were legion but so was his drinking and the other women that went with it. I had out-forgiven myself—there just wasn't any more of that virtue left in me. Still, perhaps I should try once more. Maybe it wouldn't be right to reject this offer.

It was then I looked down and the face was moving from side to side, obviously saying "no" to my charitable inclinations. "No, no, no!" I caught myself up sharp. This was ridiculous; I was letting my imagination run away with me. The afternoon shadows were tricky things and I certainly couldn't let shifting light betray by better impulses.

So, when Jason repeated his question, kissing the place behind my ear that he called his, I said "Yes, Jason."

It seemed to me then that the one eye of the face completely closed and that I saw a tear trickle down the high-boned cheek. It was ridiculous but that's the impression I received.

"Hi, folks," Jason was calling, as he swirled me around in a wild dance. "Let's have another round. I'm celebrating the fact I've got the lovliest wife in the world, the kindest, the sweetest—"

I didn't hear the rest of the adjectives. My handkerchief had dropped during the turns we'd made. As Jason talked I bent down for it. The tiny square of white had fallen over the face. When I picked it up, it was wet. Liquor? Something spilled from a cocktail? That's what I thought, but when I lifted it to my nose there was no alcoholic odor. I touched it to my lips, the tip end of my tongue, and there was the bitter salt taste of tears.

And I had seen a tear roll down the face! Incredible, but in my mouth was the tang of a man's tears. I looked down. The face *was* much clearer; the back of the head was completely filled in, with the hair clustered on it dark and curly. The eye was open now and it had acquired depth and perspective. It looked down at me with admiration and a kind of pathetic appeal. The full lips trembled. It was as though they were calling out for me to lean over and touch them.

So strong was the illusion that in another moment I might have done so, but Jason

came back just then with two cocktails. "Here you are, darling." He handed one to me.

I took it, and he encircled me with his arm. "Sweet, let's drink to us!" He was very tight, but his charm was in the ascendancy. I drank with him and forgot about the face.

THE reconciliation proved very absorbing. Not since our honeymoon and the first year of our married life had Jason been so completely devoted. It was as though the five miserable years through which we had quarreled had not existed. We were suddenly back, continuing the first twelve months of our felicity. I had fully intended to examine the tile with the face most carefully, the next day, when there would be no feet to cast shadows, no liquor to give ideas. But as it happened it was over a week before I went in the sun porch.

To begin with, there was the new devoted Jason, a round of parties for Myra, and several days of rainy weather, which always put the desirability of the sun porch at low ebb.

The cocktail party had been on a Saturday. It was exactly ten days later—Tuesday, to be definite—that the sun shone so brightly I said I'd have my lunch in the sun room. I had completely forgotten the face by then.

But once seated on the red bamboo chair with my lunch tray on a matching table before me, the face obtruded itself into my vision. It was slightly to my right and not as much *en profile* as I'd thought. It was more three-quarter; there was a glimpse of the other cheek, more than a suggestion of the other eye. The original one looked at me reproachfully.

I caught my breath. The effect was really amazing. Since I'd seen it the face had gained dimensions too. There was depth and thickness to it now, and it was larger—the hair had spread over to the next tile. I leaned over and examined the lines—the cracks of time. They were deep, almost fissure-like, quite outstanding against the blue-green glaze. It was almost as though some artist had made a sketch freehand of Pan, before the tiles went to the kiln, and it had lain under the glaze for years until time and wear had brought it back to the surface. I had no hesitancy about knowing it was meant to be Pan; the little forehead horns were very clear now, and the full, sensuous lips could have belonged to none other. Pan in the deep wood, admiring a dryad, with all the connotations of a satyr.

I wasn't particularly interested in my lunch but I went on eating it automatically, watching the face as I did so, surprised to see the reproach melt away to admiration, then longing, and finally desire undisguised.

At that point I caught myself up sharply. "Sheila, you're being ridiculous," I said aloud.

Johnson, the maid, appeared in the doorway. "Did you call?" she asked.

"No." I was amused. She'd heard me talking to myself. "But now you're here, you can take the tray. I'll just keep my tea."

When she came over I pointed down to the tile. "Look, Johnson. Don't you think it's funny the way those lines on that tile make a face?"

She peered down and then drew back. "*It is*, indeed, Madame, a strange face—not quite human, although it's not very clear, is it?"

The outlines weren't vague to me now but they had been when I had first seen them. Suddenly there was a voice in my ear. "You have tasted the salt of my tears; that is why you see more clearly."

The tea cup I had been holding crashed to the floor, the china ringing hard against the tiles as it shattered into bits. I found control of myself quickly. "Oh, Johnson, I am sorry. It just slipped out of my hands."

"And your good china, too," she sighed. "I'll clean up, Madame, and give that tile a bit of an extra rub, too. Maybe we'll be able to wipe that ugly face out."

But I knew she'd never be able to erase it from my mind.

Or the floor, either!

IN FACT, her efforts only made it more distinct to me, although she seemed to think she had obliterated some of it.

When she had finished and gone, I sat there trying to figure it out. There *was* an outline of a face on the tile. Johnson saw it, so it wasn't entirely imagination. She wasn't educated enough to know about Pan; if she had been, she too would have seen the resemblance. So I wasn't completely off track.

There was a face. It was inhuman, but there actuality stopped. The rest had to be imagination. The cracks of time could make a face but they couldn't make it weep or speak. That had been my own mind, and yet what it had said made sense in a way: "you have tasted the salt of my tears; that is why you see more clearly."

There was a fairy tale I remembered from my youth and Andrew Lang's colored fairy books. It was called "Elves' Ointment" as I recollect, and it was the story of a midwife brought to attend the birth of an elf. Given ointment to put on the new baby's eyes she had inadvertently gotten some on her own, and had seen everything differently thereafter—that is, until the elves caught on and took her new sight away from her, with quite tragic results, as I remembered.

But the analogy held. I looked at the face again. The full lips were parted. I could almost feel the hot quickened breath on my nearby ankle.

This was getting beyond sense. I was making myself see things that couldn't be, hear a voice, feel emotions that should be kept under cover. It was incredible; yet it was so real! It was uncanny. It made me a little afraid.

I decided I would go up to the attic and see if there were any left over tiles and if there were, I'd have this one, with its cracks of time, removed as quickly as possible.

"Of course," I told myself sternly, "it's only because you've been emotionally stirred up these past days. What with Myra's engagement and Jason, no wonder you're full of imaginings."

Then I heard the voice again, an ageless voice, thin and reedy, yet with a curious appeal. "Don't fight me. Just listen to my music."

The music was soft at first, fleeting into my brain with gently-vibrating notes. From its first sound I didn't think any more. I couldn't. I could only listen to something indefinably lovely—music that soothed and made me know that nothing apart from it really mattered. It held the essence of life.

Suddenly it changed and became little

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tongues of flame licking around me, touching me here and there like carressing winds. Then there were waves of sound that vibrated through my entire being. And it seemed as though all the magic there had ever been was in them, weaving itself around me until I was a part of it, and I knew that nothing so lovely had ever happened to me before. I was suddenly a part of nature. Soon all its secrets would be known to me, and—

JASON's voice: "Hi, Shelley, where are you?" came from the living room, driving the music away. I didn't answer. I didn't want Jason to find me. I wanted the music back again. I wanted to lose myself in it.

"Shelley." Jason was calling. "Shelley." His pet name for me, part nickname for Sheila and partly made up from my admiration for the poet.

I looked down at the face. There was a finger touching the lips, as though to enjoin silence. Another crack of time, but it looked like a finger and its meaning was plain: the music was to be our secret, there was no mistaking that. And I wasn't imagining it. There *was* a finger on the thick lips.

For a minute I thought of them touching mine, and I knew that was what I wanted most in the world—that, and the music.

"Soon. It will be soon." The thin, reedy voice was like the notes of a pipe, coming from far-off enchanted places. A pipe, Pan's pipe.

Then Jason was in the room, exclaiming: "What the—! Why didn't you answer me? Didn't you hear me call?"

"No. I—I guess I was half asleep."

He leaned over and kissed me. There was warmth in his kiss but it left me cold. The wonderful music had deadened my senses to everything but its own magnificence, and Pan's, the god who had called it to being.

I looked down at the tile. The finger was no longer against the full lips. Instead, they were forming a word, "Wait." It was as plain to see as though I had studied lip-reading.

Jason's eyes followed mine. "Hello! Look at that cracked tile. We'll have to change that. You know, those cracks make a face, a horrible, repulsive face that gives me the shivers. I'll go to the attic tomorrow and fish out another tile and get rid of that face on the bar room floor."

Against my will I laughed. Against the hurt look in Pan's eyes. But suddenly the expression changed to one of cunning, combined with determination.

Words came to my lips. Without any volition of my own I found myself saying, "There's a piece of broken china still there. I broke a cup."

Jason bent down, picked up the piece of the tea cup the maid had overlooked, which I hadn't even know was there. He swore softly and shook a few drops of blood from his finger. Aghast, I watched the full lips catch them, suck them in.

"Jason," I cried. "You're hurt!"

He laughed. "Don't look so horrified; it's only a small cut." Again he shook off a few drops of blood, which the mouth on the floor caught.

I shivered. There was something so horrible about the mouth and the blood that I forgot the music.

"Come on." Jason caught me up. "I'll let you put a band-aid on it and then we're stepping out. The Crawleys are waiting for us at Agello's."

Agello's was our local "21." Going there was always an event. I was quite excited. There in the bright lights, with the gay music, I could forget the face and the silly things it provoked me into imagining.

I thought that, and I was happy, looking forward to fun at Agello's with Jason and the Crawleys, a couple we both liked tremendously. I was quite elated. Jason had his arm around me and it felt fine—warm and vibrant.

But as we left the porch I saw the face again. The lips had color, and they formed a word, "Soon." And as we left, an echo of the thin, fluting pipes sounded in my ear.

At Agello's I managed to forget. I had to forget, otherwise I would begin to think I was going mad. The face on the floor was genuine enough; Jason and the maid had both seen it. They had sensed evil. The maid had said it was inhuman, Jason that it was repulsive. So the face was all actuality. The rest had to be an overworked imagination, and I didn't like the implications of that.

I made up my mind there on the crowded floor dancing with Jason that I'd help him find another tile and get rid of the one with the cracks of time as quickly as possible. After that, I proceeded to enjoy the evening.

It was late when we left Agello's. Once we were home, Jason didn't give me time to think. It was like our honeymoon all over again, and I was glad of that.

THE next day was Sunday. Sunday was the day we usually had breakfast on the sun porch in our pajamas. In the light of day I wasn't worried about the face, but it was comfortable in our room. "Let's be sissies," I said, "and have breakfast in bed."

"Lazy." Jason laughed. "But it's too nice a day to be on the north side of the house. No, Shelley, we're going to bask in the sunlight. And just to pamper you, I'm going to carry you thither." He leaned over the bed and gathered me into his arms.

"This is fun," I grinned, "but in the interests of modesty you'd better let me have a negligee."

He held me down so I could retrieve my blue crepe housecoat from the foot of the bed. I clutched it to me, and we were ready.

On our way, Jason paused a minute before the mirror set into my closet door. "See what a pretty picture you make," he whispered in my ear. "You're like a slim dryad of the woods, and I—" he squared his massive shoulders and I felt the muscles of his chest hard against me—"am Pan."

There wasn't any music—no thin fluting or wondrous tones; only a resentment and a feeling of instinctive recoil—as though anyone could be Pan but the face. I made myself look in the mirror. Just as we were we might have posed for a calendar picture of a dryad being abducted by a satyr—not Pan. Jason's face was lascivious enough but there was no suggestion of the god in him. He was of the earth.

I, in my white satin nightie had a classic look, for the satin moulded my form and was a startling contrast to my red-gold hair.

Jason, in blue foulard pajamas, looked like an advertisment straight out of "Esquire." Direct physiological appeal. But I knew instinctively that within him there were no nuances, none of the subtle approach that is so dear to a woman's heart. His was not the knowledge that Pan possessed.

It was at that moment I heard the music—the faint, thin piping that shivered against my nerves and made them vibrate to its tune, music that grew louder even as I listened.

Jason started towards the door.

The music was calling to me. Calling to me to come, to give myself up to it completely.

Suddenly I was afraid. Jason was very dear, human and near. I clung to him. "Don't go downstairs," I begged. "Let's stay here." I tried to put allure into my voice. Anything to keep him here where it was safe, where I could shut the door and drown out the music that attracted me, as something evil that is yet beautiful can always do.

Jason's mind was one track. "Breakfast first, darling." He walked on, and the music swelled in tone. It was making me forget everything but my desire for it—and Pan, for the two were inescapably one.

Still I tried to hold to reality. "Do you hear music?" I asked Jason, as he descended the stairway.

"Music? Lord, no! But I do hear a vibration like the jangling note of a wire that's off-key. After breakfast we'll look for it."

"There may not be time." The words said themselves.

"We've got all day, darling." He was at the bottom of the steps, advancing to the living room. The music was becoming more and more pronounced. Like Wagner's fire music, little tongues of flame licking about me, growing larger and stronger.

I knew they were waiting to envelope me. I made a last effort. "Jason, we musn't go to the sun room. There's something there—something—" "Evil" was what I'd meant to say but the word was still-born on my lips. The music had taken possession of me. I was encased in it as surely as Brunehilde ever was on her fire-ringed mountain. Little flames of music were licking about me.

THEN we were in the sun room and Jason put me down.

My wrapping the negligee around me was mechanical, and wasted, for Pan's eyes looked through the material, yes, through the skin, into my very soul. He was complete.

now, a full-grown figure, and even as I watched he rose from the blue-green tiles, wholly dimensional. His boring eyes held mine and the music was like a flowing river of fire, touching me, everywhere.

"So, you have answered my pipings?" It was as though he were singing.

"Yes," I replied, "And now that I am here?"

"Shelley, what are you talking about?" Jason's voice was impatient.

The music diminished. "Didn't you hear?" I began.

"Wait." Pan's voice was thunder-clear.

Suddenly arrested, I stood still. But my gaze betrayed me.

"What is it?" Jason asked. Then, when I made no reply he became insistent. "*What is it?* What do you hear?"

That caught me up short with surprise. It didn't seem possible that he didn't hear that glorious, engrossing, enveloping music. I found words. "But you *must* hear the music. It's so wonderful. And you must see—"

I looked at Pan. He was regarding me strangely and shaking his head.

I stopped short. Jason followed my gaze. "It's that darn tile. You've been acting peculiarly ever since you saw those cracks. I'm going to dig it out."

"No," I cried. "No, Jason, let it alone. There's danger!" I don't know how I knew there was danger for Jason, perhaps it was the expression in Pan's eyes. But how, or why I knew Jason went in peril? And at that moment the urgency was upon me to save him.

"Don't be foolish, Shelley. How could there be danger in a tile—a cracked tile, at that?"

"But he's larger than you." I was struggling against Pan and the music now, trying to save Jason from something intangible, some danger I sensed but couldn't rightly name. I was afraid, and yet, what did Jason —anything—matter, against the vibrant music that was swelling around me?

"Sheila!" Jason exclaimed. "I think you must have a hangover—seeing things. A hangover, or be mad. That tile has bewitched you. I'm getting rid of it now—this second."

He went to an old sea chest where he kept tools and things. He opened it and took out a hunting knife.

I could see Pan's triumphant smile.

"No, Jason, no!" I shrieked, and then the music was so loud, so beautiful that I couldn't think of anything else. I was completely lost to the music, hypnotized as any snake by a master piper, enveloped by melody which was part of Pan.

As in a dream I saw Jason advance toward the tile, knife in hand. I saw Pan moving towards him.

The music accelerated. For one desperate moment I came to my senses. "Jason, come away!" I screamed, and rushed to him.

Pan was before me. With one hand he thrust me back; with the other he turned Jason's arm with the knife inward, so that the knife was toward Jason's body. I saw the blue tile gleaming, crackless and pure, just like the others. Pan had left it. He had materialized. Just as I realized this, Pan pushed Jason. My husband fell, and as he did so, impaled himself on his own knife as surely as any ancient Roman running himself through with his sword.

There was a funny gurgling noise. Then Jason rolled over on his back. I knew the danger had struck. Jason was dead.

But Pan was alive!

Alive and wholly man, and the music too was a living, throbbing thing, marvelous beyond human knowing, enveloping me until I was part of it.

The wonder of the music was completely mine now. It swept me forward, into Pan's arms.

I DON'T mind being in prison, or the fact that I am on trial for my life, charged with the murder of my husband. I don't even care that they are saying I am mad, perhaps because I know that if I told them the truth they would be certain of it.

I don't mind being confined in this horrible cell, or any of the rest of it. I don't mind, because the cracks of time opened for me, and now the wonderful music is always in my ears, and the remembrance of Pan's kisses on my lips.

And the certainty that at the end I shall feel them again!

The Follower

BY ALLISON V. HARDING

DR. CHARLES G. ADAMS, JR., maneuvered his car to the curb, braked it and snapped off the ignition. He checked the brick and clapboard suburban house. It said 117. Then he locked the red, two-door sedan and went up the walk, bag in hand.

Adams was young enough to still feel a small sense of anticipation when he met a new patient for the first time. The suburb of Fayette was small enough and classical enough in its medical symptoms to become, after a while, something of a bore.

One-seventeen's occupants, the Turnbulls, were new in town. He'd heard about them through old Dr. Bragg, the senior physician of the community. Edwin Bragg had phoned him earlier in the evening.

"Some new people up River Avenue have called me. Couldn't get a line on just what it was. I'd just as soon not make a night call. This rheumatism of mine isn't feeling too good. Would you mind dropping in?"

You didn't say no to Dr. Bragg.

Adams thumbed the bell at 117 and waited. There was a quick step from inside, almost as though they'd been expecting him. The door opened a crack and then widened hastily at the sight of the figure with the black bag.

"Is this Doctor——?"

"Doctor Adams. Mrs. Turnbull?"

"Yes. Do come in!"

The speaker was a worn little woman of about fifty, thin, with fluttery nervous hands. She led the physician into the living room of the two-story house.

"This is my husband, Doctor Adams. Did Doctor Bragg tell you. . . .?"

"I make many of his night calls for him," Adams supplied.

Mr. Turnbull was a mere counterpart of his wife. Adams recognized in their faces the same harrassed and beseeching look that one sees so often in the relatives and friends of the sick. There was an awkward silence for a moment, and then the woman said, "George is upstairs."

She showed the way, her thin cotton-clad legs trudging up the steps ahead of him. Almost reluctantly, Adams thought. Almost fearfully.

WHEN they reached the upper landing and paused outside a closed door, he said quickly, "What seems to be wrong with George? Your son, I suppose?"

She nodded absently at the second half of his question. "I . . we don't know what's wrong with him, Doctor!"

And with that and as though it took a great effort, she reached worn fingers for the doorknob and plucked it open.

"This is Doctor Adams, George," she said hesitantly to the figure sitting bolt upright in the bed set on the far side of the chamber. She stood uncertainly on the threshold after Adams had walked in, and then as abruptly as she'd entered, Mrs. Turnbull retreated, shutting the door behind her.

The man in the four-poster bed was thirty-ish. He was making flapping, irritable efforts to get his pajama sleeve back over his shoulder. In the moment that Adams saw it exposed, he noticed the angry redness of an ugly wound. There was scratches on the man's face, bruises.

"What's the trouble, Mister Turnbull?" Adams questioned, placing his bag down carefully and drawing a chair up to the bed.

At first glance, his new patient appeared to be rather a surly fellow. The pleading light in the eyes of the Turnbull parents was not in evidence here. Adams set his face in the prescribed stern professional countenance and the other glared back. Finally the man in the bed averted his gaze and stated, "I don't want a doctor!"

"Your parents called me."

The only reaction to that was a shake of the head. The bruises and scratches were ap-

Your greatest enemy is within yourself. Beware if it ever gets loose!

Heading by Boris Dolgov

parent. On the bedtable was some cotton and a small bottle of witch hazel. Apparently George had been treating himself.

"How about that shoulder?"

"Nothing the matter with it," George Turnbull replied angrily.

Adams weighed the possibilities in his mind. Turnbull could have been in some sort of brawl or mixup, and resented his family's criticism and interference. Bruises and cuts from such carryings-on rarely killed anybody.

He was debating with himself the chance of making a dignified retreat from what appeared to be an unfortunate situation when there was a slight sound outside the window, as though the branch of a tree, thrown against the eaves by the wind, had scraped along the shingles.

ADAMS would hardly have noticed it except that Turnbull's reaction was so immediate and so drastic. He jumped, literally jumped. His lean hands came up over the coverlet, and for a moment, Adams saw the clawlike tension of the fingers. Fleetingly Turnbull's eyes sought the physician's as though he were saying, "Did you hear it too?" And in those eyes there was something that a doctor learns early to recognize. Something that he sees from the earliest days of his training till his last case. Something which takes many forms, and yet to those who know how to unmask it is always the same.

It was there in George Turnbull's eyes. Stark, terrible fear! That broke the ice somewhat. Adams brought out his smile of fatherly reassurance although he could not have been more than a few years the senior.

He bandaged up the wound on George Turnbull's shoulder, cleaned the scratches on the side of the man's head, all the while talking busily of other matters, for he decided that the worst approach here would be to make some inepitude like, "Hmm. Looks like you've been in a fight."

He checked Turnbull's pulse, found it rapid, but the man was not feverish, and as Adams left the room, he celebrated with himself the small triumph that at least those dark eyes following him to the door, even if not cordial, were grateful.

Downstairs he reassured them.

"That assortment of cuts and bumps and bruises. There's nothing serious about any of them. Nothing to worry about as far as I can see."

Mr. Turnbull pursed his lips. A look passed between the two parents.

"Then he didn't tell you?"

"Tell me what, Mister Turnbull?"

"About this . this idea he has?"

The mother put in, her hands fluttering with an attempt to depreciate the urgency of her words.

"I think he's just nervous, Doctor, but he has this idea that somebody—and who in the world would want to, anyway?—that somebody's trying to harm him! He thinks somebody's pursuing him!"

The secret was out and they were both glad. Adams could tell that it was something that was hard to be said.

"He didn't say anything to me about that."

"No. No, of course he probably wouldn't," Mr. Turnbull nodded.

"He doesn't like to talk about it," quivered the wife. "And those awful cuts and bruises! They must have happened somehow. Maybe there *is* someone following him!"

"Now Edna!"

DR. ADAMS stood slightly at the outskirts of this purely family discussion. When in doubt—silence; it was one of his personal rules.

"Would you mind coming in tomorrow?" the mother pleaded.

The physician bobbed his head in agreement, wished them goodnight and left.

A doctor with the ordinary endowments which have helped him along the long trail of his medical education can, in many instances, win the confidence of the most reluctant patient if he has sufficient time and sufficient interest. A young doctor but a few years from medical school is seldom, if ever, in the turn-them-away-from-the-door position of an older and long-established practitioner.

Many of his calls and contacts are, as a matter of fact, obtained through these very same elderly physicians whose practices have outgrown their strength. Many run-of-the-mill doctors are quite satisfied with the

routine run-of-the mills' flu, appendicitis, broken bones, rheumatism and pregnancy. They do their job much as a plumber does his or an engineer his. Performing with adequate efficiency and beng paid for it.

But Adams was not run-of-the-mill. He was that paradox in present-day medical practice—the man who should have been a doctor . and was! Not somebody who would have fitted in just as well behind the shirt counter of a department store or as an attorney or a business executive. He was thought well of by the older physicians of the county, who invariably judge their young successors-to-be with a critical eye.

It was typical, therefore, that Adams attended George Turnbull with a greater enthusiasm than that which many of his contemporaries might have had for such a refractory case. The red two-door sedan could be seen often parked in front of the walk at 117 River Avenue.

And in time, the young doctor's patience was rewarded. If George Turnbull still refused to be completely candid—for young Adams felt sure he had some dark unmentionable secret behind those brooding eyes—he at least tolerated the physician's visits with better grace and growing cordiality.

They talked of many things. Of common interests like photography and travel and art. Never by so much as a word or insinuation did Dr. Adams attempt to force Turnbull into the subject that was surely most prominent in both their minds.

The parents were pathetically grateful, although Adams, at the conclusion of each visit, would admit frankly that he knew no more than previously. The two would look at him helplessly and ask that question that people do about a loved one. A question that is so often unanswerable, "But what's *wrong* with him, Doctor?"

AT TIMES, Adams would feel a slight prick of conscience. Here was involved no question of a bacteriological condition, of a virus or of any physical pathology whatsoever. Adams knew what other of his confreres would do under the circumstances. A young man in adequate, if not robust, physical health and yet a self-sentenced prisoner in his room and in his house for long periods of time for reasons which were not at all plain, reasons which he did not care to elaborate on. And yet reasons which concerned themselves with some supposedly mysterious being he had, in times past, claimed to his parents "followed" him and "attacked" him.

These confreres, Adams knew, would shake their heads, suggest that the young man be taken to a psychiatrist in the city, and wash their hands of the whole affair.

Adams was not yet positive that this problem was a psychiatrist's. The innuendos about people following George in the street —granted, a classical symptom of mental irrationality—had come not from George Turnbull but from his parents. The original bruises and cuts on the young man at the time of Adam's first visit to the house, the physician reasoned, could have been caused by a variety of strictly normal and average occurrences. An accidental fall, an overly boisterous argument in a beer tavern, and so on. The possibilities were limitless.

There was one factor of which he felt certain. Young Turnbull carried with him constantly a burden of fear. It showed in a thousand ways that had manifested themselves since that first time when something brushing against the eaves of the house had made George jump with an exaggerated reaction to a trival commonplace.

But on a soft, early twilight Saturday in July, there was so much to think about besides medical cases. Adams was returning from the outskirts of Fayette where he had prescribed heat and salicilates for the Flower's boy with his suspiciously rheumatic joints. Only this morning the young physician had been notified that office space he'd applied for in the city nearby was now available.

THIS urban location had been an objective of his for some time. The city, with its wider opportunities for practice and research, with its elaborate hospital facilities and clinics. Adams was understandably excited. Of course he would regret leaving Fayette. Even in the short time he'd been in town, he'd made many friends. It always interested him to see how the pattern of people's lives worked out through the years. But there would be new people and new lives and new patterns.

As he turned the red sedan around a corner, his tires squeegeed on the heat-softened tar. It reminded him to have some air put in, and he thought with amused speculation as he looked over the stubby snout of the car that perhaps, who knows, a few years in the city and he'd have that Cadillac he'd always wanted.

He'd been driving through the humid, early twilight immersed in his own thoughts, and then he noticed where he was. And that made him think of George Turnbull—because he was only a few blocks from 117 River.

It followed from that that he thought, "I have several weeks more here. That's not much time. But maybe I can help him before I go."

That was the coincidence of it. Where he suddenly was, where it made him think of, and then his headlights, just turned on, picking up the fleetingly running figure on the walk at roadside! As he drew abreast—still no recognition although the furiously running man spelled some kind of trouble—a white, strained face turned, highlighted by the outer cone of the doctor's headlamps.

IT WAS young Turnbull, and Adams, startled by the tableau, guided his car quickly to the side of the road.

"Hey! George!"

The figure staggered toward him.

"Why, man, you must have been running a marathon! Get in here!"

Turnbull clutched at the sedan's door, got in as though all the demons of hell were behind him in the shadowy headlighted walk he'd been running along. His breathing came in great gasps, but the white, strained look of his face was not alone from exercise. He turned his head twice, thrice, and looked out the back window of the car as they accelerated slowly away before Adams said, "What's the matter? Think the hound of the Baskervilles is after you?"

It was meant as a weak joke. But there was no laughter anywhere in George. The words were choked as he said, "I wish to God it were something like that! I mean, a dog or something—natural!"

Adams felt an uncomfortable premonition. Better press his advantage.

"What do you mean?"

BUT Turnbull's only reply was to put his head in his hands and sob with the hopeless desperation of someone whose nervous endurance has been completely drained. Only when they stopped in front of 117 did Turnbull straighten up. Even then, his first act, as though instinctive, was to look carefully out the car window back in the direction from whence they'd come.

"What in heaven's name are you looking for?" the physician asked irritably as he guided his patient up the path. But Turnbull had sunk into a sullen, unreachable silence.

Adams saw him to bed, forced a sedative on him. But he could see that the young man was more determined than ever to keep his own counsel. He decided against elaborating on the story to the parents.

They told him, "You know, George hasn't been out of the house for weeks! Well, Doctor Adams, we practically forced him to take a walk this evening! It's been such nice weather. Do him good."

The physician merely mentioned that he'd seen George and given him a lift home.

Adams made a U-turn and started back along the way he'd come earlier with George. Yes, and not too many blocks away was the portion of the walk where he'd first seen the young man running frantically. It was a somewhat lonely stretch. Here on this side a house set well back from the road, giving no twinkling evidence of any human habitation. On the other, the long high hedge bordering the narrow walk.

Adams became impatient with himself for staring hard into the shadows, as though this "whatever-it-was" that George seemed to think was following him, was real enough to be seen!

On the way home Adams reviewed the earlier episode with George Turnbull. The exaggerated fear of something which he believed was following him. There was, too, the young man's unsociability, his secretiveness. These, the physician was forced to admit to himself, were characteristic manifestations of the schozoid makeup; and if this supplied the answer to the Turnbull situation, he, Adams, an ordinary practitioner of internal medicine, had no right to treat the man but should recommend him to psychiatric care.

Of this he was still not convinced, although he told himself that within his last couple of weeks here in Fayette, he would know better.

IT WAS precariously close to his last day in town when it happened. Adams had made his usual visits rather regretfully, and Turnbull, upon his urging and with additional coaxing from the family, was taking walks and an occasional drive down to the village on errands.

It was an accident case that caused the delay. A fractured leg to be cared for, a temporary splint to be set, and a youngster who would know better now the ominous meaning of that phrase about not "crawling way out on a limb" to be transported to the County Hospital.

So it was dark as Charles Adams made the turn into River Avenue and parked midway down its length in front of 117. The house, ground and upper floors, was ablaze with light! Light that pushed back the blackness of the night in all directions. For a moment the doctor wondered if there were a party going on and hesitated about entering, thinking that some such festivity would be better therapeutics than anything he carried in his black bag.

But there was no sound from the house even though he could see the upstairs windows opened. As his heels clicked solidly against the paved walk, he noticed absently that the one-car garage gaped black, open, and empty. Perhaps they were all out, but why would they have left all the lights on?

Then, although he had no more than slightly slackened his stride, he thought he noticed a head for a moment in one of the lighted upstairs windows. Adams strode to the door. He was enough of a regular visitor now to this house so that, instinctively, he felt for the knob to let himself in. The Turnbulls usually left it unlatched, but tonight it was locked!

He frowned and thumbed the bell. From somewhere inside the house, its thin chimes sounded, breaking a stillness that was accentuated by the night sounds of crickets from beyond the circle of light thrown out through the windows. He heard then the sound of someone running down the inside stairway. Thumping, thumping, two at a time, he guessed. Steps hurried to the front door, and a voice, unmistakably George Turnbull's, but hoarse with fear, said, "Who is it!"

"It's Doctor Adams! That you, George? Let me in!"

The portal was thrown back so suddenly and violently that the physician almost startled.

"Come in! Come in!" young Turnbull fairly chattered. "I'm so glad it's you!"

THE physician stopped inside the entrance, noticing the pains George was taking relocking the door. Noticing, too, his patient's strained, fearful face and the way the hands shook on the brass bolt.

"What *is* the matter?"

"The family's out!" George retorted as though an explanation had been asked. "They went to a movie or something. I . . I was afraid, but I didn't want to say anything to them. I only *thought* he followed me back here! I wasn't sure! Until after they'd gone."

"Want to sit down here in the living room and tell me about it?"

"No, let's go upstairs. I'd I'd rather."

George peered around fearfully at the windows facing out onto the grounds. He led the way up the steps. Adams followed silently, until they were both in young Turnbull's room.

The first thing George did was to cross to the window and look out. He stood there for so long that Adams came over to stand beside him.

"What is it? Do you see anything?"

Turnbull shook his head.

"No. Not now. But it's hard to see out there in the darkness. He stays just beyond the rim of the light."

"Who?"

"Gregor!"

Adams placed a reassuring hand on George's shoulder.

"Hadn't you better tell me all about it?"

THE young man sat down in his room, but his eyes kept finding the window. He moistened his lips several times as though he were going to speak, but when he did, it was to say:

"I know you've probably got a lot to do, but could you wait just a little while longer? Until the family gets back?"

Adams nodded his head thinking to himself that of course this was absurd. He began to doubt his own first and lasting impression that here was not a case of mental aberration, but something else that he, as an internist could cope with. George's appearance of near-fragility that Adams had noticed on his first visits had certainly intensified. Maybe. . . .

Some of the unspoken doubt and incredulity must have come to his face, for George looked at him and said finally:

"I shall tell you! I shall tell you the whole thing, Doctor, if you'll . . if you'll let me.

"You know . . ." young Turnbull's words and his desire to speak seemed to gather momentum. ". . I've never told anyone, not *anyone,* the whole story just as it was from the very beginning. Because . . . well, because of a lot of reasons. I didn't want to hear myself use the words that would give it reality, although I've known now for a long time that there *was* reality to it.

"You see, in the beginning I doubted, and in that doubt, there was a certain measure of security. And then, I'm afraid to talk about it. Perhaps it should always be *my* secret!" He looked at Adams, and his attempt to smile was a pathetic effort. He spread his hands wide.

"I . . I sort of don't know where to start!"

"Start at the beginning," the physician urged.

"The beginning was nearly twelve years ago. I was eighteen. The same sort of eighteen, I think, as a million other boys throughout the country. Nothing had been different. Not medically—oh, the usual measles and mumps—but nothing up here!" Turnbull tapped his head significantly.

"I thought about sports and girls and going away to college in the fall. It was as simple as . . well, as eighteen is!"

Adams nodded at the right time. His face was sympathetic, receptive. After a while, Turnbull's eyes stopped drifting towards the window. They took on a reminiscent look. There also seemed to be the early signs of some relief on that strained, fear-ridden face. The young man told his story well, expressively, and Adams found himself listening with full attention.

"It all started on a spring day not many months after my eighteenth birthday. Father had bought, only a few years previously, a small cottage . . well, cabin, really upstate. We used to go up for holidays when he was free from his work and I from school. It was lonely, and yet not too inaccessible to the city. I think that fact and a nearby trout stream were the big selling points to Dad. Mother liked it least of all, I suppose because it was so deserted, as though you were in another world!

"There was an old stableman a few miles away, and I used to rent a horse from him and ride. That was quite an enthusiasm of mine at eighteen. I had had no experience, but I was learning.

"ANYWAY . . . this spring day—it was a Saturday, I remember—we'd all gone up to the cabin Friday night. Dad was off early the next morning with his highboots and trout flies. Mother had some sewing to do and magazines to read and our little cocker spaniel, Fury, to keep her company.

"I headed for the stable, accomplishing the couple of miles hike through pretty much of a trackless wilderness with the pleasant anticipation of getting a good bit of horse-flesh under me! When I got to the horse barn, old Ben, the stableman, told me that my usual mount, Sherry, was ailing. When I heard that news, I guess my face looked like a kid who's just seen Santa Claus' whiskers fall off and his father underneath, for old Ben said dubiously, 'There's Thunder, my other horse. But, George, you're kinda new to this ridin' business to take him on, I think.'

"I worked for ten minutes on the old man. Finally, I persuaded him to let me take Thunder for my ride. I guess I needed my head examined, all right. Because Thunder was a big horse, bigger than Sherry. A black gelding with a deep chest and powerful flanks. I mounted, and we were off. Rather more quickly than I expected, I guess, but I did manage something of a grin and a wave to Ben, as though

to say, 'I planned it this way,' as we galloped off at a furious pace into the forest.

"Thunder had more tricks to him than the little horse, Sherry, I was accustomed to, but I felt I could stay with him, and there *was* a thrill to it. I remember, I lost my hat on that first dash from the stable, but I was a show-off to try and wave to Ben, anyway. I still held onto my riding crop. I must explain about that. My father had given it to me for my birthday. It was larger than the usual size with a much heavier stock. Weighted with lead like some of those the military use.

"Once, on Sherry we'd been attacked by an ugly brute of a dog. The horse had been as frightened as I was as she was used to the playful antics of our little cocker spaniel. Then there was another episode where I'd been walking home from the stable and had run across a large snake. The oversize riding crop was my father's idea and I'd become very accustomed to it.

"It had a good tough thong at one end for opening pasture gates, but the elongated and lead-weighted stock was its main feature. I felt I could take care of the biggest dog now or snake, and for that matter, a tap under Thunder's ear, I felt would subdue even that redoubtable mount!

"We cantered along on that spring Saturday until I lost all sense of direction. I was aware only that we were in a part of the hilly and wooded countryside I'd never visited before. There was no sign of human habitation anywhere! Once, I rode past the remains of a hunter's fire, probably days old.

"FINALLY from the position of the sun in the sky, I realized it was getting on towards late afternoon and I turned in the direction I thought would be homeward bound. I'd had considerably less trouble with Thunder after the first hour or so. He had a young and powerful horse's disinclination to be commanded by anyone. He would rear and jounce me with stiff forelegs. He was erratic, but after a while, as I stuck in my saddle, he got accustomed to me, as horses do.

"There were times when I thought we were retracing our earlier course out from old Ben's stable. There were other times when I felt sure we had worked even deeper into the now-desolate woodland. The position of the sun was something of a clue, for setting it at my back, I felt I was bound ultimately to come on the right trail.

"Also, I began to hurry Thunder, for I didn't particularly anticipate with joy the walk home from old Ben's in complete darkness! Besides, my parents might worry. Although I knew I still had several hours of daylight, I began to push Thunder more and more, rapping his flanks with the end of my crop. And that proved my undoing!

"We came to a small hillock, mounted its side, and then at a glance from the crest, I saw that it shaled off rather abruptly. The downward incline was uneven and treacherous, with loose small rock. Thunder hit that grade at almost full speed, and as luck would have it, one of his hooves slipped on a stone. The horse, in trying to recover his balance, gave a powerful lurch, and I, completely unawares, was jolted out of my saddle to sail completely over the animal's head!

"I landed at the bottom of that incline heavily and brutally. It was not—and I remember this distinctly—that I hit any one part particularly. Had I landed squarely on my head, life for me certainly would have ended then and there! But I took the fall all over. The impact was spread over my whole frame. It was the most unbelievably severe jolt I'd ever felt! Even as my stunnedness turned into unconsciousness, I heard the sounds of Thunder running off into the forest. And then I knew no more.

"HOW long I lay there, I'm not sure. There were moments when I was partially conscious. When one or two of my senses seemed to function momentarily, then to stop, letting me down into the black abyss of nothingness.

"I remember several times looking up at the trees that seemed to form an arbor over me. Full spring hadn't come yet, and their winter-stark limbs were silhouetted against the deep blue of the late afternoon sky. And it was then that some of my other senses began to operate. It was then that I sensed rather than felt or saw—for I could

not move my arms or legs or turn my head —I sensed a presence beside me!

"I can't describe it any other way. I went off again into some sort of stupor, only to feel through the heavy darkness that befuddled my brain, a tugging and pulling at me as though Fury were playing with me at home, pulling me by my coat sleeve! But this seemed not as gentle as Fury's small dog tugs.

"I came to then again, and this time there was more of me awake and alive, for I felt coldness and noticed that the sky was purple, the light less. And I could move. It was reassuring to wiggle my toes and fingers.

"Then I heard a sound off to my left! The crunch of stones. Laboriously I forced my head to one side, and I saw a figure not ten yards distant, but retreating from me! I tried to call, but my tongue and throat would not yet work as well as my eyes.

"And there was something terribly familiar about that retreating figure! Or perhaps it was the suede riding jacket he wore! Or the oversized riding crop he carried in one hand! They were mine, and the indignant thought that I was being robbed as I lay helpless after my accident forced me upright on my elbows even as the figure disappeared into the underbrush.

"I shook in my thin cotton undershirt. Finally, after several tries, I stood up. I thought I heard a sound in the woods in the direction I'd seen him go and I called, 'Hello! Hello there.' But there was no reply and then no sound! I was completely alone!

"I started to walk as best I could, picking the right direction. My strength was low but I kept staggering forward. It grew darker and I would have to stop more often to rest.

"It was during those stops that I first noticed the other sound. If I stopped very suddenly, I could hear it. Someone else was walking off there somewhere in the underbrush! And they would stop when I stopped! But not quick enough if I did it suddenly, so I'd hear a moment's snapping of twigs and rustling of bushes!"

AS GEORGE TURNBULL told his story, it was as though he relived those long-ago moments. His face took on even more the harried expression of the pursued, and he went on.

"That journey back to old Ben's stable was an eternity of nightmare stuff. I was groggy and sick from my fall, and only the growing fear that I was being followed by some sinister being who, for reasons best known to himself, refused to answer my shouts of help, spurred me on to a speed that was certainly beyond my strength.

"I remember collapsing in front of old Ben's door, smashing the knocker against metal as I fell. And then there were brief moments of lucidity that came and went. Fleetingly I can recall a trip in Ben's buggy. My father and mother and Fury coming out of our lighted cabin to crowd around while Ben explained what he knew. My father carried me to my bed, and Mother bathed my many scratches and cuts. I remember I begged them to leave the kerosene light burning.

"We got back to the city the next day and they rushed me to the doctor's. The careful examination showed that I'd suffered no broken bones, but there was some thought that possibly I'd had a mild concussion. The doctor said to take it easy for a couple of weeks and I'd be all right.

"But I never was from that time on. For the first time in my life, I'd come to know what real fear was! Not the trivial, passing pinpoints of fear that a child or an adolescent knows. But a deep-rooted terror like a pain! I tried to talk to people about the experience that night, but the doctor's interest ended with the precise medical potentialities of my fall.

"As to the other person I'd seen, and the someone or something that had followed me, old Ben told my parents simply, 'T'aint nobody walks around in those woods! Leastwise 'ceptin' the huntin' season. And that weren't it!"

"I came to realize that everybody thought my story of the sense of someone beside me, of seeing the figure walk away in my suede jacket and carrying my crop, was some sort of hysterical projection of my own. When I argued, 'But you know I came home without my jacket and without my riding crop!', somebody, either the doctor or my parents, would say soothingly, 'Yes, of course, George. You lost them on the walk home!

We'll see that you get others as soon as you feel like riding again.'

"But I did not feel like riding again. I became increasingly listless and preoccupied with my own thoughts, most of which centered around that unfortunate experience. I took less and less interest in school affairs and barely graduated.

"THEN, five months from the night of my accident, I knew that the somebody I'd met there that night in the woods was still following me! I was coming home from my aunt's house, when I took a shortcut. The way led through some vacant lots and along some deserted streets. It was late and lonely. But I'm not quite sure which came first. This strange feeling or the sound of footsteps behind me! But when I heard them, I knew they were following me, and I connected it with the accident!

"I quickened my steps past refuse piles of junked automobiles in the vacant lots. I made the street and turned under a light to look back. But I could see nothing! Nothing at all! Just the darkness and innumerable shadows, which may have been no more than that.

"I started down the deserted avenue, hurrying even more. And behind me, ringing an echo from the flagstones, my pursuer's strides also quickened! I turned several times more, but there was never anything to see! That's important, mark!

"I got home, and when I'd shut the front door and leaned panting against it, I felt foolish. I said nothing to anybody. But my pursuer, whoever or whatever he was, was closing in! The experience was repeated in a week. The feeling and the sound. Again at night. And then three days later.

"And then the fourth time—I was thinking in terms of some crank now—I saw him! I turned my head quickly and there was someone behind me. A man. A figure. He dodged out of the line of my vision, but not before I recognized the suede jacket and the riding crop in his hand!

"I saw him more often then. Sometimes even in the daytime. Never in areas where it was crowded though. If I were in no hurry, he would be ambling along easily behind me swinging the crop. If I were in a hurry to get somewhere, my tracker would also be in a hurry. And as time passed, he was less evasive. He stayed less far behind, and when I turned squarely to face him, he would merely sidle off to one side without the precipitous leap out of my line of vision he had first employed!

"Finally I spoke to my parents about him, and they looked at me with the startled expression that one uses with a daft child! I soon had to repeat my experiences to the doctor who'd examined me after the accident. Through a not-quite-closed door, I heard him reassuring my parents that 'The boy is still taken with that accident. It was, as we know, a great shock. That, and the slight concussion, affected him sufficiently to cause this aberration—of a temporary nature, I am sure.' "

"FOR twelve years, Doctor Adams, this 'temporary aberration' has haunted my life! It has shaped and molded my behavior and my activities! I don't know whether this person wanted to communicate with me. It was simply the patient, eternal trailing that grew more persistent and less secretive as time passed.

"Sometimes I would make my parents walk with me, or a friend. And in those instances, my tracker never made himself evident. But I could never face any sort of a trip alone!

"My fear remained a vague one until a Fourth of July evening several years later. We had all gone to the seashore to visit Mother's sister, and I had walked to the beach club a few miles away to watch the fireworks. I must say I rather lost myself in the activities that night. There was a girl, a perfect stranger, I started talking to, and we got along so well it made me forget for a time.

"We made plans—it's laughable now to think of the way things turned out, for I never saw her again—to meet each other the next day. And when I left her to return to my aunt's place, it was very late. Or I should say, very early. One or two in the morning or thereabouts.

"I walked along the beach towards home with a happier heart than I can remember having had in years! The tide was ebbing and the lapping wavelets made small, reassuring sounds as they uncovered sand and

mud. I was out of sight of the beach club when I turned for some reason—possibly a night sound attracting my attention. There far behind me but silhouetted by the faint luminance there always is on a beach was a figure!

"I knew immediately who it was and a panic such as I'd never had before seized me, taking me by the throat! Always before there'd been home or a busy intersection ahead if I could only make a block or two. Here, I had a mile or more of lonely wasteland in the middle of the night!

"I began to run, not turning again or looking back, for I knew what was happening there! The sand sucked at me and impeded me. My heart grew and grew in my chest until its heavy throbbing weight was more than I could bear!

"A few more frantic steps and I had lost my balance! I tripped and plunged into the sand headlong, too exhausted to try and get up. Too exhausted to even turn my head! And in seconds, it seemed, there was another presence there with me! My follower!

"I THINK until then, a part of my mind had tried to believe, to cling to what the doctor and my parents had said. That this was some figment of my imagination. But now—the thing was breathing! As it scuffed to a stop beside me, I felt a small shower of sand on my trousers' leg. I *could* hear it breathing!

"And then the worst horror of all! The strong hand that suddenly took me by the collar, jerking my head cruelly upward! The nails that scratched into my neck! I was flung over on my back. I think I was then too weak to put up any sort of a fight, particularly against the phenomenal strength of my attacker.

"I was too terrified to be terrified further or to think. But as I looked up at my assailant, my brain and nervous system suffered the ultimate shock! I looked, and not caring any longer, noticed the unrelenting cruelty of the face, the clawed hand withdrawn from my throat, the upraised other arm . with the heavy riding crop ready to smash down at me!

"That moment . . . that fractional second, looms large in my memory. But it could have been no more than an instant I waited for the inevitable end. As the blow descended, some ancient instinct made me jerk my head as a cornered animal will.

"And then . . . as though the stroke with the crop was the baton of a conductor, a sound intruded on us. I likened it afterward to the singing of angels in Dante's Inferno! Familiar voices singing! And they were coming nearer! I even remember the melody. The song—some college tune—bellowed from a score of lusty young throats. Inharmonious, if you like, but it sounded better to me than "Ave Maria."

"As the roaring undergraduates approached arm in arm along the beach, I suddenly realized that the crop would not fall again. My assailant was abruptly gone!

"I struggled to my feet, the left side of my head throbbing where the heavy blow had glanced off, and murmuring a prayer of thankfulness to the carousing college men, I made my way back to the house.

"From then on, I realized this was no myth or flight of my imagination. The bruise on my temple and the gouges on my neck were too real. And yet, as I tried to understand what was going on . . . as I tried to explain it to myself and failed, I realized how poor was my chance to convince others. So I kept my own counsel more and more.

"I LEFT for the city the next morning and became very careful. I had to. I no longer went places alone, for that was the danger. I stayed away from lonely locations, and I kept trying to puzzle the thing out. I came to have a feeling about my follower. He acquired a name. It seemed very apt. I call him Gregor! And then because on the occasions that I was careless and went alone somewhere, I would always see him, I began to realize that he knew what was in my mind. He could anticipate my thoughts and actions. And his appearance had changed. He was larger, more . . more *vital* looking than before. I wonder, Doctor Adams, can another person draw life and life's energy from you?"

Without waiting for the physician's reply, Turnbull continued.

"When you were called in a few weeks ago, he'd caught up with me only a few blocks from here. He means to destroy me, you see. Of that I am quite aware!"

George motioned in the direction of the window and the out-of-doors. "He's outside there somewhere now!"

Adams leaned back in his chair and cleared his throat. He felt both uncomfortable and regretful. He was a little disappointed in himself and his own judgment of the case. For here, in this story just revealed, were obvious symptoms of the schizoid personality. The suspicion, the obsession about being followed. They were, Adams knew, classical.

A car sounded in the drive, and by the time a latchkey turned in the front door, Dr. Adams was standing and had made up his mind. This case was really not in his province and he should therefore not assume responsibility for it. Perhaps it was just as well he was leaving Fayette. He'd say something to Turnbull's parents.

"I've got another call to make," he told George rather lamely.

The young man looked at him and smiled slightly.

"I know what you're thinking, Doctor Adams."

ADAMS left the room guiltily and told Mr. and Mrs. Turnbull that he was leaving Fayette and that he really did believe after this period of observation, that George might improve under systematic mental therapy. Yes, he'd call again—a last time before he left.

Adams remembered that last visit well, although as he sat alone in his comfortable city office, it was several months ago.

His situation now was advantageous. He shared quarters with two other doctors, and the opportunities of urban practice already looked more attractive than he'd even hoped for. It was evening, and Adams had come back to the office to clear up a bit of paper work after his afternoon at the hospital. It was a period of the day that he enjoyed. The two other doctors were gone, as well as the usual entourage consisting of telephone operator and nurses. He was alone on the sixth floor of the medical building.

As he passed through the dark waiting room, he'd hooked one of the magazines from the reception table, and he settled in his leatherette chair to look it over. A side window looked out on a little court, and as he glanced idly across, a square of light snapped off. It was a dentist's office . . . a man who often worked late. Now he was through.

Adams looked at his wristwatch. It was eight-thirty. He turned to the magazine again but found it hard to concentrate. His mind kept going back to the last visit at the Turnbulls. It was his final night in Fayette. George had been strangely upset by his leaving, and Adams was both sorry and touched by this. He reassured the young man as best he could, told him that he'd left a recommended name with the parents.

"A psychiatrist, I suppose," George had sneered.

Young Turnbull then had rushed on as though he had much to say in those last minutes before Adams left. He spoke of split personality and whether Dr. Adams thought that possibly split personality went even deeper than men of science now know.

In his haste to pour forth his innermost thoughts, George became almost incoherent, Adams thought. He spoke to the physician wildly of a conviction that he, Turnbull, had had since his fall twelve years before.

"Isn't it possible, Doctor, that someone receiving a terrible impact in just the right way at just the right time could split the thing we call the life force, split it in two the way science splits the atom? And isn't it possible that this 'other self' can draw life and life's energy from you?"

Adams tried to make a joke of this.

" . . . Because you see," George Turnbull persisted and went on, "my assailant . . . my follower, Doctor Adams . . I saw him close up. First that time on the beach, but I have seen him again many times. It's not only that he wears my suede jacket and carries my riding crop from long ago. He *looks* like me! He *is* me! You see why his name has to be Gregor!"

ADAMS had turned his face away from young Turnbull then, not because he felt any desire to leave but because there is a moment, as every physician knows, when he despairs in a case. He did not want that despair to show in his eyes and face now. But Turnbull had gone on, not noticing.

"Perhaps you have wondered why I have never talked this way to anyone else, Doctor

Adams. It's . . because, you see, I know there's a kind of danger! A kind of danger to the person I tell this to. How do we know that this sort of thing doesn't happen more often? How do we know that many of the unsolved disappearances of our time and other times are not, in reality, situations like me and Gregor? He *is* me and yet so very different!"

Adams remembered the way the young man had talked on that evening and he remembered his final handshake with George and the conviction he tried to put into his voice when he said, "This doctor I've recommended ought to be able to help you."

The way he had said goodbye to the parents downstairs and the way he left the house with some feeling of defeat and yet with relief. Then he recalled that late that night he was awakened by the phone. It was George Turnbull saying he'd forgotten to ask but he'd wanted to know precisely what Adam's address was to be in the city. The physician gave it to him, wondering the while. Impatient at being awakened, so that when George had anxiously asked, "Doctor Adams, you haven't seen Gregor since I talked to you, have you?" his answer had been a brusque "No!" and he had hung up rather abruptly.

IT ALL seemed rather pathetic now and more than a little strange, Adams thought as he sat in his city office dark and empty with evening. Pathetic that George should have asked so eagerly about his city address, for the young man never was destined to come here.

And strange, very strange—but then coincidences are—about this, this clipping here. He'd taken it only yesterday out of the paper. It had an upstate dateline, Fayette, October 3rd: "Police of this town and the county are investigating the death of George Turnbull, 31, whose body was found yesterday morning on River Avenue. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Alfred F. Turnbull of this place reported their son had gone out for a walk and could supply the authorities with no further details. Young Turnbull, lacerated and badly beaten, was killed, police say, by blows from a heavy instrument."

Adams put the clipping down and forced his attention back to the magazine.

It was then, far away through the dark office that he thought he heard the hall door of the physicians' quarters open and shut. There was silence then for a while, and the doctor found a cartoon in the periodical to laugh at.

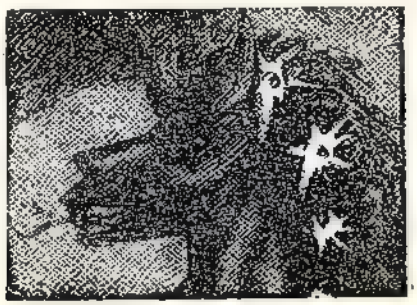
A step down the long hall that ran from the reception room took him from the magazine again. Possibly one of the technicians come back to work out a blood report. It still seemed a little early for the charwomen.

He put the magazine on his desk and found himself, as he leaned forward in the leather chair, listening to the steps. They were coming down the hall, past the other rooms towards his office at the end. His desk lamp threw little light beyond his own room, and the hall was a black square.

The steps were near enough now and it was quiet enough so he could hear the breathing. He rose from his chair as the figure filled the doorway. Shocked, surprised, involuntarily the words came out. "Why, George. . !"

The physician would have said, "But the clipping! Your death. . And you've put on weight. How well you're looking!"

But there wasn't time. The figure came towards him. And then Dr. Adams noticed the tight-fitting suede jacket and the heavy riding crop.



WEIRDISMS

Drawings — Lee Brown Coye

Legend — E. Crosby Michel

COUNTLESS THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN BURNED AS WITCHES ON THEIR CONFESSIONS OBTAINED UNDER TORTURE HOWEVER, OCCASIONALLY, THE DEVIL WOULD GIVE THE ACCUSED THE POWER OF TACITURNITY AND THE WITCH WOULD REMAIN SILENT UNDER THE MOST GRUESOME AND PROLONGED TORTURE WHICH WOULD BE CONSIDERED ABSOLUTE PROOF OF GUILT AND THE WITCHES WERE BURNED WHETHER OR NOT THEY HAD CONFESSED.

The Beasts That Tread the World

BY HAROLD LAWLOR

MY WIFE'S spoon fell into the saucer with a small clatter.

"But, John, *dear!*" she protested. "You don't actually mean—a *hoof-mark!*"

"A hoof-mark."

"On Sheila Sayre's leg?"

"On Sheila Sayre's leg," I repeated firmly, looking far more imperturbable than I really felt.

"But—but—" Marie stammered. "What did she *say?*"

Heading by LEE BROWN COYE

Those great black beasts, they are behind you, even now . . . waiting . . .

I buttered toast with deliberation. "She said she'd been dreaming."

"Dreaming?" Marie stiffled an exclamation of impatience. "And did the dream cause the hoof-mark on her thigh, for heaven's sake?"

I shrugged. "I don't know anything about it."

"Oh, *you!*" Marie said, exasperated at last, her plump cheeks shaking with annoyance. "You're the most maddening creature! I don't know how I've put up with you for thirty years! A fine doctor you are! A wonder you haven't driven me into a nervous breakdown long ago! You come home hinting of these fascinating stories, tell me just enough to drive me crazy, and then"—Marie spread her hands—"you know nothing. *Nothing!*"

She glared at me indignantly.

"Don't be so nosey, my dear," I reproved. It's very reprehensible of me, no doubt, but I'm afraid I enjoy baiting Marie's inquisitiveness. As a result we are always squabbling amiably with the mild and comfortable animosity engendered by thirty years of marriage. "I'm not keeping any secrets from you. I've told you the literal truth when I said I didn't know what caused the hoof-mark on Sheila Sayre's leg."

No more did I. But it's odd that I'd known something was wrong with Sheila Sayre, as early as the evening before, when she had walked into Petroff's Restaurant while Marie and I were dining there.

Though her Hollywood heyday was twenty-five years in the past, Sheila Sayre still entered a room as to a burst of applause. She favored restaurants, like Petroff's, that boasted short flights of steps leading down from the foyer to the dining floor, for on these she could pose dramatically, could descend slowly as if bathed in a spotlight's glare.

Time was when she had been the cynosure of all eyes at such moments, but now few heads turned. The public is notoriously fickle, and many of the younger generation had never even heard of Sheila Sayre. But of this she seemed fatuously unaware. You, watching her artfully artless entrance, were amused or bored or irritated, depending on your own temperament.

She was slight and blonde, delicately formed and tinted, and resembled nothing so much as an animated ornament from a wedding cake. She must have been fifty-five or sixty years old if she was a day, but she affected the vivacity and the ingenuousness of a girl in her very early teens.

SHE was a little ridiculous, if you like, yet one couldn't help but admire the single-minded purpose with which she tried to withstand the onslaught of old age. You knew she worked at it indefatigably. You were hazily cognizant of strict diet, rigid massage, careful beauty-parlor ministrations going on ceaselessly behind the tinsel backdrop that Sheila Sayre so determinedly held up before the public gaze.

As she entered Petroff's on this evening, she was flanked on either side by two young men who must have been many years her junior, surely.

Marie leaned forward to me across the table, and hissed, "Oh, look, there's Sheila Sayre!

"Did you know she's just moved into our building? M-h'm. She has an apartment on one of the upper floors. Doesn't she look lovely? And good heavens, she must be a thousand years old. I wonder how she does it?"

"M-r-rmph," I said thickly, through my lobster.

I work long hours as a doctor, and as we have no children and Marie has much time on her hands, she's an addict of the movie magazines. She knows, as a result, most of the technical terms associated with the movie industry, and she can tell you the life history, if you're interested (and in my case, even when I'm not!), of every Hollywood star for forty years back.

"I saw her last picture, *Flames of Desire*—let me see," Marie pondered. "Why it must have been all of twenty-five years ago! And she was no spring chicken, even then. I remember how fuzzy the film always was in her close-ups. That was because they used to 'shoot' her through a gauze filter, so the wrinkles wouldn't show. She must be my age, at the very least."

Whereupon Marie whipped out her compact, and surveyed her plump, kindly features under the gray hair with considerable dissatisfaction. "It's just a *shame* the way

I've let myself go! They'd have to 'shoot' me through a brick wall."

The lobster must have made me mellow. "You suit me just as you are," I said gallantly.

"Don't knock yourself out, darling," Marie dimpled. "And anyway, why wouldn't I? You're no Tyrone Power your ownself! But pay some attention, dear. Look at Sheila Sayre. Don't you honestly think she could pass for thirty-five?"

I glanced covertly askance, and for the first time gave Sheila Sayre my close attention.

And then I really *was* interested.

Sheila Sayre was glancing idly about, and there was just the faintest hint of a frown on her forehead.

And it was just then that I saw a dull shadow pass before Sheila Sayre's pale blue eyes. The shadow was faint, ephemeral. Like a veil held before a candle-flame.

For I knew it for what it was.

Fear.

And I wondered, curiously, of what Sheila Sayre might be afraid, that it should show in her eyes here in the safe surroundings of Petroff's Restaurant.

UNFORTUNATELY I said nothing to Marie of the shadowed fear I had noticed in Sheila Sayre's eyes, and thereby lost a fine opportunity for posing later on as a prophet.

We were just sitting down to breakfast the next morning, Marie and I, when someone knocked on the door. When I opened it, Mr. Hazeltine, the building superintendent, was standing in the hall.

"I'm sorry to disturb you so early, Dr. Derry," he apologized, "but I wonder if you'd mind going up to 809? Miss Sayre has just phoned down to the desk, saying that she was injured during the night."

"During the night? What happened?"

Hazeltine lifted his shoulders. "I don't know. She wasn't talking very coherently over the telephone."

My bag is always packed and ready for just such emergencies, so I picked it up and called to Marie that I'd be back shortly. The cage of the automatic elevator was still standing at our floor where Hazeltine had left it.

When we were in it, and he'd pushed the button marked '8', I asked, "Didn't Miss Sayre tell you the extent of her injury, or what had caused it?"

"No. She just babbled something about being hurt, and that she wanted a doctor. I—I received the impression she was pretty badly frightened, so I sent one of the maids up to stay with her until you could get there."

There it was again. Fright. In connection with Sheila Sayre. And it recalled to my mind my fleeting impression of the night before.

We left the elevator at the eighth floor, and Hazeltine led me down the carpeted corridor toward the back of the building. As the choicer apartments were in the front, I couldn't help but think that this was quite a come-down for Sheila Sayre, who had had her Beverly Hills mansion, and Malibu Beach 'cottage,' and her *pied-a-terre* in New York. Had them twenty years ago, that is (according to Marie's relayed gossip). Before the market crash, and before Miss Sayre's personal Hollywood star had flickered and gone out in a blaze of frustration.

Heigh-ho, I sighed. And I thought, not very brilliantly, that was Life for you. Up and down.

The maid answered the bell, and Hazeltine told her who I was, but he didn't come in himself.

The maid said, "Miss Sayre is in the bedroom, Dr. Derry."

"Is that the doctor?" came a lilt from the bedroom. "If it is, send him right in!"

I entered alone at this invitation, and thought, as I took in the scene before me, that vanity certainly died hard in some women. Despite her injury, Sheila Sayre didn't appear to be suffering. Certainly, she had felt well enough to prepare herself for the doctor's coming. She was wearing a bed-jacket of pink marabout, and her face was delicately tinted, even at that early hour, her blonde hair becomingly arranged, the soft rose lights artfully disposed to cast no ageing shadows.

The whole effect had the unreality of a stage-setting. At any moment I expected to hear a director call, "Lights! Action! Camera!"

I believe those are the terms I've heard Marie use.

But Sheila's careful artifices didn't fool me. She was fifty-odd, despite them. In all justice, though, it must be said that it was difficult to discern Time's traces behind the skilful make-up she'd applied. If not a teen-age girl, she might successfully have passed for a woman of thirty-five with any man not a doctor.

Her manner was gracious, and a trifle condescending. It was plain to be seen that she still conceived herself to be the glamorous star of twenty-five years before. Clearly she expected me to be bowled over.

Her speech was a curious mixture of Boston and Southern accents, which I shall not attempt to reproduce, delivered with the prattling coo of an artless child.

The effect to my mind, it would have pained her to learn, was decidedly phony.

"Oh, doctor, I'm so glad you're here!" Miss Sayre gracefully waved me to a bedside chair. "I've been through the most distressing experience. You must assure me my wound isn't serious! I've promised to dance tonight at the Polio Benefit, and I mustn't—I simply must *not!*—disappoint my public."

She eyed me archly, judging the effect of this. I murmured something suitably flattering. She seemed a child—a rather tiresome child—who must be protected from disillusionment at all costs. I don't know just why, but I found her self-delusion, her affected air of extreme youth, a little saddening.

SHE sank back among her lacy pillows with a little sigh. "First," she said, "let me give you the background. For some time now I've been haunted by the same recurrent dream. I'm running, running as fast as ever I can, desperately trying to elude something pursuing me, something close behind me. Oh, Doctor, it is dreadful!" Sheila's hand sought her heart. "There seem to be so many of them behind me! There is the most awful thundering noise, and I can feel their hot, fetid breath on my back!

"But it is dark, and I cannot see what they are. On they come, and on! Always, in the past, just as they seemed about to overtake me, I awakened. Frightened. Terribly, terribly frightened! But safe, thank God! Safe, here in my own bed, my own room!"

She had acted it all out for me, with considerable verve, but my pulses remained normal. I wondered just how much of this was self-dramatization, how much truth. With ego-maniacs like Sheila Sayre, one can never be sure.

I attempted to look sympathetic, and I must have been a better actor than she was, for she appeared consoled and went on with her story, sure now, apparently, of my rapt attention.

"But last night," she said, "something happened that never happened before. The things—whatever they are—came closer than they ever had before. I ran and ran till my lungs were bursting, but still they followed. And then—then—I fell!"

Her eyes, wide with horror, were on mine, waiting for my reaction.

"Ah!" I said non-committedly. But it sufficed.

"Fell!" Sheila cried. "With the things so close their hot breaths scorched me. I could hear their snorting and panting, and the terrible thunder of their hooves. And then I felt this sharp, crushing pain here" —she touched her left thigh—"as if one of the things had trampled on me. I woke then in agony, my forehead wet with perspiration, my leg paining me excruciatingly. Somehow I managed to phone down to the desk for a doctor."

She sank back, apparently exhausted.

"Let me see the wound," I suggested in my best bedside manner.

The down puff was thrown back, and the sheets of palest pink crepe de chine. The sheerest of chiffon nightgowns was lifted until I could see the wound on Sheila Sayre's left thigh, just above the knee.

I stifled an exclamation. Despite her dramatic story, I'd hardly been prepared, indeed had discounted the greater part of it. But now I stared, shocked, at the bruise.

It was black-and-blue, and unmistakable, standing out against the white flesh like a brand.

It was, beyond a doubt, the imprint of a hoof!

At fresh sight of the injury she had suffered, Sheila Sayre changed. Gone now were the labored histrionics. There was no touch of phony melodrama as she clutched

my hand, and whispered, "Dr. Derry, I'm—*frightened!*"

She wasn't acting. I know real fear when I see it. And it was licking now, like a hot tongue of flame, back of her pale blue eyes.

I couldn't do much for her fear, except murmur soothingly. And God knows, I could give her no explanation for her wound. I'm no psychiatrist, and to tell you the candid truth, I've always been, rightly or wrongly, somewhat of a mind to think that a good bit of psychiatry is nonsense, anyway. This thing of probing the subconscious, of interpreting dreams—well, my sense of humor is too great to take much of it very seriously, and if this be heresy, make the most of it. I daresay I'm just an old fogy.

Sheila Sayre's whole story had been incredible to me, but the wound was real enough. I treated the bruise, and told her I could see no reason why she shouldn't be able to dance that night. The initial stiffness should wear off in a few hours. She forgot her fear then, apparently, and grew arch and vivacious once more.

I made my escape as soon as I decently could.

Yet the fact remained that I was a sorely puzzled man as I went downstairs. And when Marie questioned me avidly about the hoof-mark, as I told you in the beginning, I could offer no rational explanation. How satisfy her curiosity when I couldn't satisfy my own?

The whole thing set me to wondering deeply.

What species of beast could have trod so brutally on the frantically fleeing Sheila Sayre?

AS IT happened, Marie and I had tickets for the Polio Benefit that same evening. I hadn't really wanted to go, but Marie was insistent. I think she had a certain ghoulish desire to see Sheila Sayre dance now that she'd heard the bizarre story of Sheila's wound—much as people will linger on a curbstone to gape at a house in which murder has been committed! At any rate, she ding-donged about it, until in self-defense I relented and consented to go.

In a way, now, it's fortunate that I did, else I should have missed the most important link in the story of those last fantastic hours of Sheila Sayre.

Once I'd agreed to go, I went the whole hog, for such is my nature. "We might as well make a night of it then, Marie," I said largely. "I'll blow you to dinner at Petroff's again first, before going on to the Benefit."

So it was that we were lingering over dessert and second cups of coffee when Sheila Sayre came in, again with the two young men who'd been with her the night before. I think she considered their youth proved that her own hadn't faded quite, that she was still capable of attracting young men. Poor Sheila! Everyone knew she footed the bills for these evenings.

She was heavily made up, wearing a bewildering creation of black net and sequins, with bird-of-paradise feathers in her high-piled hair. She made the usual grand entrance, and there was the customary dramatic delay on the staircase to attract all eyes.

But few diners looked up. The clatter of silver and of china, the low-toned murmur of engrossed conversation, continued while Sheila and her escorts proceeded to their reserved table.

She passed quite close to us without seeing us, but I noticed that she was aware her entrance had created no great comment. And I saw, too, that the baffling expression I'd noticed on her face the evening before was on it again.

Perplexity, perhaps. But, most of all—Fear.

When she reached her table, Sheila hesitated a moment before sitting down. I saw her eyes scan the nearby diners, all of them intent on their meals or their dinner companions, and then, without warning, Sheila's eyes turned up under their lids, and she collapsed.

One of her slender, dark, young escorts caught her before she fell. He eased her gently into a chair, and stood there chafing her wrists helplessly. Both he and the other boy seemed completely at a loss to know what to do.

Marie had uttered an unintelligible exclamation when she saw it happen. I lost no time in getting over to Miss Sayre's table, elbowing her young men out of the way.

They were inclined to resent my brusqueness at first, but were pathetically relieved when they learned I was Sheila's doctor.

Well, she was all right. She had only fainted. After a few minutes, I succeeded in bringing her around. Her pale blue eyes opened, and she recognized me at once.

"Oh, Dr. Derry!" she said, shuddering. "The Beasts! They were after me again!" Terror sprang into her eyes then, and she tried to get up.

I put my hand on her shoulder, to keep her in the chair, to try to quiet her.

But she threw it off, and her terror deepened. "But—don't you see!" she cried. "It happened here! Here in the evening! In a brightly lighted room! Dr. Derry! *It isn't a dream!*"

My hand tightened on her shoulder. I tried to indicate by a warning shake of my head that this was hardly the place to discuss the subject.

The two young men were exchanging puzzled glances.

Sheila must have understood what I meant, for I saw her eyes go to the young men, close momentarily as if she sought to summon her resources, and by the time she'd opened them again, she had made a gallant recovery.

"How silly of me!" she murmured. "My mind must have wandered. I felt quite faint for a moment. It must have been the air in here."

"It *is* close," one of the young men said.

"But there!" Sheila smiled widely. "I feel quite all right now. Thank you so much, Dr. Derry."

She dismissed me as casually as that, and I noticed, for the rest of the while we remained in the restaurant, she was almost feverishly gay. It had been in my mind to suggest that she go home and to bed, instead of on to the Polio Benefit. Things would have ended much differently, perhaps, if I'd offered the advice and she had taken it.

But I didn't. And she didn't.

Back at my own table, Marie said, "What was wrong?"

I kept my voice low. "The beasts, again. I felt a little shiver of foreboding, remembering what Sheila had said. *It wasn't a dream!* I thought a moment. "You know, it's the strangest thing, but I have a funny feeling that I have some clue to the beasts right at the back of my own mind. Something has been nagging me, ever since last night. A memory, perhaps."

Marie was intrigued. "I wonder what it could be. Certainly the 'beasts' mean nothing to me."

"Perhaps I'll think of it," I said. "Anyway, I have half a mind to call on Sheila Sayre tomorrow, to see if both of us, together, can get to the bottom of this thing that is haunting her."

And so I should have done, no doubt, if it weren't for one fact that it never occurred to me to consider.

How was I to know that for Sheila Sayre there was to be no tomorrow?

WE FINISHED our dinner, and went on to the theater where the Benefit was to be held.

Marie often says now that she wishes we had never attended. For she learned then just how cruel the public can be to an entertainer who has outlasted her fame, outlived her youth.

Sheila Sayre didn't appear until well along in the program. When the master of ceremonies at last announced her, there was much rattling of programs while many of the audience sought to find out just who Sheila Sayre really was.

And when she finally made her entrance, the applause could only be described as modest.

Poor Sheila! She might have passed for thirty-five, but not while dancing. Gone were the grace and the elasticity of youth. The two young men she'd dined with were her dancing partners, and Sheila moved creakingly between them. They were really young, and the contrast was too cruel.

There were a number of bobby-soxers in the audience who had never even heard of Sheila Sayre. How could they have?—born, as they were, long after her day. They watched at first politely, but seemingly in some bewilderment as this elderly woman sought to hypnotize her audience into believing she was a creature of fire and spirit, no older than they were.

Sheila made a spectacle of herself. I hated to watch, but seemed unable to tear my eyes

away. My toes were curling in my shoes with vicarious embarrassment.

And then, toward the end, it happened. Sheila essayed a difficult step, stumbled awkwardly, and only saved herself from a ridiculous fall by a miracle.

Perhaps they thought it comedy. One of the bobby-soxers giggled tentatively. And then they all started. It was contagious. Peal after peal of laughter rolled through the hall, until even the older people were laughing helplessly, too. It was one of the finest examples of mob psychology that I've ever seen.

Marie's fingers tightened on my arm. "Oh, I wish they wouldn't," she said, and there were tears in her voice.

For Sheila had stopped dancing, and she stood there, obviously in amazement, while she looked out at these guffawing fools. Her thoughts were plain to be read in her face. They *couldn't* be laughing at her? But then even she understood. And I saw the slow, unhealthy flush of red that crept up over her whitewashed skin.

Something more. I saw her eyes, and that obscure shadow of fear was in them again. I knew now what it was, beyond a doubt. And I knew Sheila knew.

It was fear of old age. She saw the specter of the years, grinning hideously at her now behind those laughing faces. The years she had defied so long. A death's-head, grinning.

She stood there shivering, and I think in the agony of her embarrassment she had become paralyzed, was powerless to walk off the stage. Her eyes roved wildly from side to side, striving desperately to find some cranny in which she might find refuge from that sadistic laughter.

At last, belatedly but mercifully, someone backstage had the wit to ring down the curtain.

I WILL never forget the deep sense of depression that accompanied Marie and me as we went home. We couldn't even bring ourselves to speak of the hideous humiliation Sheila Sayre had undergone.

Marie only said once, low, "I wish we hadn't gone."

Silently I heartily seconded the wish.

It was the following morning that Hazeltine again knocked on our door. When I opened it, he was standing outside, his face the dirty gray of a scrub-cloth. His eyes held the blank, unbelieving stare of a man who had just seen a ghost.

"Miss Sayre—" he began, then stopped to swallow.

"Yes?" I could feel my heart sinking. After her dreadful experience at the Polio Benefit, had Sheila Sayre to bear the additional burden and fright of her old nightmare? I'd hoped she could find, for a while at least, release and peace in sleep.

"Miss—Miss Sayre is dead." Hazeltine's chin was trembling. "The police are up there now."

"Police?" I said stupidly.

"Yes. You see, there were—peculiar circumstances about the death. They—they don't know just what caused it. It couldn't be murder, couldn't be suicide. The Medical Examiner seems quite baffled, and said he'd like another doctor's opinion on the cause of death. When I told him you had attended Miss Sayre yesterday morning, he asked me if I'd bring you upstairs."

NATURALLY, I went right up to Sheila's apartment. There was a confusion of blue-coated figures in the living-room, and then I saw the Medical Examiner, Dr. Whitcomb, a balding, fussy little man whom I'd met once before at a medical convention.

"Ah, Derry." He held out a hand. "Come with me, please."

We went into the bedroom alone, and he stood back while I approached the bed. Miss Sayre's body was lying upon it, the down comforter drawn up to her breast. I moved it back a little, my eyes on her face; and put my stethoscope to her heart.

She was dead, all right, as Whitcomb himself had already determined.

He came forward now, and drew down the comforter and pastel sheets. "What do you make of this, Dr. Derry?"

I stared down in bewilderment at what had once been the white, unblemished body of Sheila Sayre. The chiffon nightgown that she'd worn was ripped to tatters, and her corpse was black and blue from head to toe, a welter of interlocking and overlapping hoof-marks!

Whitcomb's voice sounded awed. "What

in God's name could have caused such wounds?"

I wondered irritably how he thought *I* could possibly know. I felt a little sick. "It looks as if she'd been trampled by a stampeding herd."

"A herd, Dr. Derry? Here—on the eighth floor—in an apartment so small it would hardly accommodate a good-sized dog?"

I knew that as well as he did. No need for him to tell me.

I TOLD him then of my interview with Sheila Sayre yesterday morning. Of her previous wound, and of her dreams. And in the telling, I felt again that nagging something tugging at my memory. Something. If I could only remember what it was. I felt it would be a clue to the whole grisly business.

Hoof-marks. Beasts. A herd. Of what? Cattle? Oxen?

Oxen!

A bell rang in my mind. As quickly as that. And then I did know what had happened to Sheila Sayre. These *were* the hoof-marks of oxen on Sheila Sayre's body! Of *black* oxen.

A few of the policemen had come into the bedroom while I had stood there lost in thought, seeking that elusive clue. Whitcomb was looking at me as if he thought the sight of Sheila Sayre's corpse had been too much for me.

"I know now what happened, I said softly. And I did know, here in my heart, though they never believed me. True, the theory was fantastic. But surely it was no more fantastic than the manner of Sheila Sayre's death? And to this day, *they* have never explained that.

I quoted Yeats, the line that had been nagging at my memory for so long:

" 'The years like Great Black Oxen tread the world
And God the herdsman goads them on behind.' "

Whitcomb and the police were exchanging puzzled glances. It was obvious they thought that I had gone mad.

But *I* knew I was sane, though the scoffers stared. I saw it all too clearly now.

The years. Those Great Black Oxen that Sheila had feared and eluded for so long. She'd danced before them—gaily at first, more and more frenziedly toward the end. But last night, at the Polio Benefit, she had known the dance was over. She'd known irrevocably then that she was old. And the oxen—they'd caught up with her. They'd trampled her. They'd conquered her at last.

But do you, too, think the explanation fantastic? Ridiculous, perhaps? And do you scoff—you in your strength and youth?

I wouldn't, if I were you.

For they're marching relentlessly onward still. For you. For all of us.

Look behind you! They're right at your heels!

Those Great Black Oxen.

Those *beasts* that tread the world!

The Daughter of Urzun

BY STANTON A. COBLENTZ

Heading by VINCENT NAPOLI

A face you never forget, in this world or the next.

IF I live to be as old as Father Adam, I shall never forget that face. Something strange and ominously suggestive about it instantly caught me, and has never lost its grip on my imagination. Yet the features were ordinary enough, of a not uncommon Oriental type: the countenance round and swarthy, and a little fat, the low forehead

curved in a comely crescent, the thick lips wide and down-turned with a slightly cynical twist, and the eyes big and black, and lustrous with a faint smoldering quality. It was the eyes, I am sure, that arrested me with that indefinable and horrible fascination; the eyes that leered at me like fathomless wells of evil; the eyes that, beneath their languid long lashes, seemed to contain at once a smirk, a threat, and the hint of a snaky seductiveness.

Nothing could have been more prosy and "normal" than the circumstances under which I saw the stranger. Marjorie and I were seated in a New York subway train on the way to visit some friends in Brooklyn; and had stopped at the Eighty-sixth Street express station when the stranger took a seat just opposite us. She remained there as far as Fourteenth Street—no more than about ten minutes; and during the interval, by some perverse attraction, I could not take my eyes off her. Whether she noticed me I could not say; there was an enigmatic eastern imperturbability in her stare; but probably she had no idea how I shuddered and felt a weirdness about her presence, as if grisly ancient depths of recollection had been stirred; as if she were someone whom I had met before under gruesome, heartbreaking circumstances.

I breathed a sign of relief when she left the train; and was doing my best to forget her when, eight hours later, on returning from Brooklyn, I saw her enter the train and again take a seat directly opposite me! The chances, you say, were vastly against this? I do not deny this; among all the multitudes of passengers in all the hundreds of New York subway trains, the prospects of such a repetition were surely not one in a million. I almost felt, absurd as it may seem, that some intelligence had guided her again to a position opposite me, so that the impression of her might seep still more deeply into my consciousness. For the same baffling reaction was there again, even stronger than before—the sense of something powerful and sinister, with which somehow I had been connected.

When the woman had left the train, Marjorie turned to me, her normally pale face paler than ever, her candid blue eyes distended as if she had seen an apparition. "Did you notice *her?*" she asked, trying hard to make herself heard above the rumbling of the cars. "I saw her when she got on, and somehow just couldn't keep her out of my mind. She filled me—oh, with the most terrible thoughts, just as if she was a snake that wanted to bite me—or had bitten me once."

Marjorie, I knew, was not one who easily formed unpleasant impressions of people. And I had nothing to say when she imagined that somewhere, somehow, she and I and that mysterious third had been tragically interlinked. But I noticed how convulsively she clutched at my fingers, as if afraid that I might vanish from her clasp.

THAT night I had an eerie adventure—I will not call it a dream, for it had a sharpness, a clarity altogether unlike the ordinary dream experience. The word vision will express it more nearly, though there was nothing mystical or blurred about it; this was, rather, like something I was living through, and all the scenes, colors, sounds and scenes were those of reality.

It seemed that I had been transported to a wide, flat land; beneath a blazing hot, blue sky. To my right a broad sluggish river flowed among its reeds; in the middle of the stream a robed man was clumsily paddling a round, tub-like little boat; clumps of palm trees varied by feathery mimosas dotted the banks; pelicans, cranes, herons, storks and other birds stalked among the rushes, foraging for food; while across the dusty plain to the left, the grim, squat walls of a town arose, formed of a sort of large red brick. I noticed the square bastions, the doors with the semicircular tops, the crudely made decorations of stern, bearded, spear-bearing men and of curious tailed gods with heads like lions or mastiffs and wings like eagles. But all this, while fantastic and grotesque, had an aspect of such familiarity that I do not remember even wondering about it.

A moment later—the transformation seemed instantaneous, and I do not recall traversing the distance between—I was inside the city, threading a narrow, winding street, with the stench of long-accumulated human litter in my nostrils. Above me buzzards flew on lazily flapping wings, look-

ing for some unsavory morsel; lean, hungry-looking dogs skulked ahead of me in packs, snapping at one another and snatching at fragments of food; low hovels built of reeds and clay lined the way on both sides, a few of the less wretched among them being surmounted with conical domes.

With the rapid stride of perfect familiarity, I took my way along that deviously winding alley, and at length plunged into one of the huts and passed through the windowless, mat-paved interior to a sort of small courtyard, where lay large stones for grinding corn, side by side with a great baking oven with its ashes that rarely were allowed to smolder out. Before the oven, wielding the fire-stick designed to relight the flames should they be extinguished, a woman was standing; and though she was black-haired and bare to the waist, and her skin was of an olive complexion and her eyes a deep brown, somehow I knew and was not surprised at knowing that this was Marjorie.

She greeted me with a frown on her work-tired face, which, despite the gathering lines of trial and care, had not quite lost its youthful attractiveness. Words immediately began passing between us; and the strange part of it is that while I knew that they were in some foreign language—and one normally unfamiliar to me—I understood perfectly all that she was saying, and had no difficulty about responding in the same unknown tongue. From her first word, it is evident that she was angry; and what she said may be translated as follows:

"Have you been again to see Erinnu?"

My reply was an equivocation; I know that I was striving shamefacedly to keep something from her.

"By the great god Bel," she swore, throwing down her fire-stick, "you *have* been there! Why else would your clothes bear not the dust of the bricks that you pile—now when the sun is high and the day is made for working? You have been there, Tamman, though you swore to me by the name of glorious Anu that you would go not!"

I remember that a sense of guilt swept through me, but that I answered with denials and evasions; that this but increased her anger; that my own wrath grew correspondingly; and that after many bitter words, which flew between us like missiles, I turned my back upon her sobbing form and fled the court.

Yet as I stormed out, the sight of our toddling little son Merdoch sobered me. The look in his wondering round dark eyes was like a rebuke; and self-accusation and remorse swept over me as I remembered how well I had loved my young wife Rebo, and how we had laughed and rejoiced together on the housetops at night, before her life had begun to be hollowed out by the weary ceaseless round of household duties: the daily fetching of water from the river, the bruising of the corn and making of the bread, the spinning and weaving and clothes-washing that were women's natural lot in addition to the recurrent burdens of maternity. But now that she was less beautiful than she had been; now that, in the vigor of my young manhood, I had been seen by the Lady Erinnu as I worked as a brick mason on a court of her father's palace; now that I had been flattered and offered favors such as I had never dared dream of before—what right had Rebo to step in my way and halt my advancement with her woman's jealousy?

So I asked myself; but even as I mutely put these questions, my mind was troubled by remorse, foreboding, and fear.

BY AN instantaneous shift, as when the scenes of a motion picture are changed, my environment had been transformed. The mean, low houses were no longer about me; I stood before a huge, squat mass of masonry, marked by deep grooves and projections made in an ordered, patterned manner, and varied with terra-cotta cones of red, yellow and black, and with spiral, triangular and hexagonal decorations of the same hues, giving a bizarre but not unpleasing effect. In front of the low, arched gates, through which one could pass only with difficulty, there was a long, yellowish limestone trough, filled with water and ornamented with figures of women bearing vases; and just within, I could see bearded soldiers bristling with heavy glittering weapons. . . .

In some way, I cannot say how, I had passed the gates; the walls of the building

had closed about me. To my eyes they were stupendous, majestic, although as I remember them now they seem uninspiring enough: the clay floor was covered only with mats; the white plaster walls were bare except for pictures of tailed monsters, half man and half hyena, and of men with falcons seated on their wrists; the furniture consisted merely of some square, four-legged stools with lions' feet, some copper stands containing vases and lamps, a low bed with golden trimmings, and an ivory-inlaid wooden chest apparently used for storage. The light of the chamber, which was about fifteen feet square, was like that of early twilight, the only illumination being admitted through the little, oblong door and the small hole crudely cut in the ceiling.

I know that I waited a long time in this chamber, waited impatiently; and then, with a slow and languorous movement, *she* entered. At a glance I knew that this was the Lady Erinnu; and at the same time, by some superimposed later vision, I realized that she was one with the strange unknown of the subway. There were the same features of a rather commonplace Oriental type, the countenance round, swarthy and a little fat, the low forehead curved in a comely crescent, the thick lips wide and down-turned with a slightly cynical twist, and the eyes big and black, and lustrous with a faint smoldering quality.

However, there was a difference. She was younger now, and more queenly in her bearing; she wore a thick, heavy robe, gaudily striped with green, blue and crimson; immense bracelets studded with colored stones hung from her arms, and she had fantastic-looking earrings, shaped like purple beetles; there were rings on her fingers, and even around the ankles above the soft, heelless leather shoes; her black banded hair held together on her forehead by a fillet, was twisted into a coil on the nape of her neck; and her belt gleamed with the daggers customarily worn by high-born ladies.

A TERRIBLE fascination gripped me as I rose from my little stool to greet her. There was in it just a suggestion of the horror which I had felt at that eerie subway encounter, but there was much besides: a rage, a flame, a fury, a seductiveness that possessed my entire being. She did not speak much, and words seemed little necessary; but when she held out her arms, I opened my own; and in a moment she was throbbing in my clasp, lithe, sinuous, panther-like, a thing of curves and fire, that kindled me as if with some live, poisonous exhalation. Even amid the fervor of my passion, my reasoning mind had not abdicated wholly; even amid the deceptive sweet charm that ravished my mind and spirit as they had never been ravished by anything else on earth, I knew that I was tempting the hurricane, was playing with havoc and ruin, was following a precipice road to disaster. But about that kindled, voluptuous face and that voluptuous warm body there was something I could not have have resisted if I would. The snake's folds were enclosing me, but I was wooing the snake's embrace. And I had my moment of storm and joy before she again stood before me, her face no longer convulsed from the depths within; while I, grown soberer now, saw in those black curtained eyes a leer as from unfathomable pits. But when she whispered into my ears the two short words, "When next?" an answer was not long in coming to my lips.

It seemed but a moment before I was away from her again, in one of the narrow, vile-smelling streets between the low reed and clay houses. In my own mind I was making excuses. After all, how could I, Tamman the brick mason, refuse anything to Erinnu, the favorite daughter of Urzun, the king's most powerful minister? Men who had incensed the noble ladies had been

known to disappear mysteriously; and doubtless the crocodiles of the river had dined the better in consequence. Besides, with her good favor to help me, I might be able to rise, and—who could say?—receive the training of a royal scribe, and no longer live in a dingy den in the manner of mere masons but be elevated to a solid, square brick house like those I had often helped to build?

But as these thoughts stole over my mind, I had a vision of the face of Rebo, tear-streaked and pitiful as she toiled to bake my bread and weave my garments; and my mind was crossed with a premonition so black that I shuddered.

THERE were many later scenes that flashed back upon me; scenes in which I again stood with Rebo, angry and arguing. Then there came another episode with Erinnu, when I was with her once more, in the palace room, now duskier than ever and lighted with the dim flame of an oil lamp. It seemed that we had been having a serious conversation, and there was much that troubled my mind, although the seduction of that full, round face and those baleful, big black eyes was still upon me. I knew that it was of Rebo that we had been talking, and that Erinnu's words had seared like acid into my brain.

"Put her from you," she urged, as nearly as I can express her peculiar, incisive command. "Put her from you, Tamman; she is but a dead block of clay in your path. With her to drag your feet, you will be all your life as a beast of burden that lumbers with the plow. By the great glory of Shamash! without her I will see that you become a light of the court. My father Urzun will deny me nothing; when you are clad in soft robes, as becomes your new post, and throw a fringed shawl colored like the rainbow above your tunic, you will outshine all the men of the palace. Then you will be a fit partner for the daughter of Urzun."

Punctuated with an embrace, this appeal was difficult to resist. Yet in my heart my fondness for Rebo was not dead, though she had angered me much of late; nor could I forget my little son Merdoch and the duty I owed him. Nothing on earth is more of a curse, a terrible curse, than to be placed under such a temptation as then tore me: on the one hand my drudge of a wife and the colorless drudging life of duty, until I was early worn out and bequeathed the same weary, toilsome round to my children: on the other hand, this seductive, bright-clad creature whose every touch and look enthralled me, my elevation to the life of the palace, a lucrative post, and a future of luxury and honor.

"As I venerate our great king, I—I do not know, Erinnu," I faltered. And I saw how, at my hesitation, the woman's wide, fleshy nostrils dilated, and little pointed flames began to gather in the sultry black of her eyes.

"You do not know?" she demanded, giving her head an imperious toss which barely suggested what a living fury she might become if denied her way. "Then in the name of Sin the moon-god, consult your mind and find out! I give you till tomorrow to decide if you wish to be as the toiling ass in the fields or as the eagle on his mountain perch. Now go!"

There was no arguing against this abrupt dismissal. It was but a minute or two later, or so it seemed, when I found myself outside the palace gate, beside the yellowish limestone trough, where some draught animals were satisfying their thirst. Twilight lay upon all the houses; but it was not too late for me to see clearly the figure that waited at the side of the road, and almost hurled herself upon me, bitterly accusing.

"Tamman! You have betrayed me! You told me you would go not to see that vile thing in there again! Your son cries, and calls for his father. Your unborn child already begins to gnaw at my vitals. But you disport yourself with a worthless creature of luxury, who knows not what it is to haul wood for the fire, or water from the river. Shame on you, Tamman! You have disgraced us all."

"Disgraced you, Rebo?" I answered, feebly. "Where is the disgrace? I but wish to better our lot."

"By the gods! not my lot. Not your son's! You know it, Tamman!" she wailed, attempting to wind her arms about me in a last despairing appeal. And then, in tones of passion that brought back to mind

the woman I had once wholeheartedly loved, "Have mercy, Tamman! Have mercy on me and your son! Repent of this wicked alliance before it is too late! What use has that base thing in there for such as you? She would not blink her cruel eyes if the lions of the plain devoured you after she had had her will? Take your solemn vow, Tamman, on the ashes of your forefathers, that you will see her not again!"

As I glanced toward the sunset that had spread a hot, red flame beyond the river, something of the dazzle of Erinnu's presence and the glitter of her promises was still upon me. I saw myself arrayed in gaily colored woolens, saw myself in the court, a subject of reverence and envy; and a faint anger possessed me that this woman before me, this woman who claimed to love me, should wish to deny me so much.

"I can take no vow," was all I answered.

IN THE growing dusk, the change that overcame Rebo's features was terrible to behold. The dark eyes flashed fire, the face was distorted with such rage as I did not know her capable of; her voice was edged and incisive as she uttered a curse so frightful that I dared not repeat it, and finished by pointing a finger at me, and shooting out the words, "Tamman, you are my husband no longer!"

Before this denunciation, I stood quite shocked and unbelieving. She had uttered the unforgivable insult, the challenge that few women dared ever speak to their fate and lord, the words that put an end for all time to a marriage. Such words could, indeed, be spoken without penalty by a man, but never by a woman; ancient tradition prescribed a frightful retribution for the wife with the temerity so to address her husband: she would be thrown into the river, and drowned.

Furious as I was with Rebo for her insolence, surely nothing would have been further from my mind than to exact the traditional punishment. But no sooner had she spoken than I became aware of spectators all about us; silent spectators of our quarrel who stood leering in the background and now came forward like ogres bent on their prey. Among them I recognized several guardsmen of Urzun's palace, and a fearful pang stabbed at my heart as I foresaw the possible consequences.

A CONFUSED, nightmarish period followed; I only knew that I wandered in a daze, restlessly, consumed by fever. I have a faint recollection of sleeping in a brick court or alley, after groping through dim night streets by the sepulchral illumination of the moon; while in disturbed dreams I seemed to see Rebo, her arms outstretched, pleading and calling. Then all was drowned out in one long, horrible gasp, as if tight fingers were pulling at my throat; and I awoke, and found that it was morning.

Wearily, drawn by some irresistible attraction, I made my way toward the gates of Urzun's palace. On my arrival, I was greeted by some guards, who with evil smirks informed me that the Lady Erinnu desired speech with me. For the first time, I did not look forward to meeting the enchantress; however, there was no possibility of opposing the will of Urzun's daughter.

She greeted me with pleasure and triumph in her great black eyes. Her lion-skin robe gave a wild but faintly intimidating quality to her beauty.

"Rejoice, Tamman!" she threw out her welcome. "I have attended to everything! All is over!"

"Attended to—what?" I gasped, a monstrous fear suddenly flooding over me. "What is over?"

She drew near me with a weaving, snake-like movement; cast me an arch, insinuating look; and answered, in a purring voice, "Can you not guess, my lover? "

I merely stared at her stupidly.

"As the high god Bel is the protector of our house," she went on, wooingly, "I have cleared the path before us. Rejoice, Tamman! No longer is there anyone in our way!"

"By the dust of my fathers, you do not mean—"

"I mean that I have visited the justice of the gods upon *her*. Did she not publicly insult you last night, and put you from her as her husband? Did she not do outrage also to my good name, which has never before been demeaned by a spitfire of the streets? You know very well the penalty for her crimes against the sacred law! So

as not to protract her suffering, I have seen that vengeance was inflicted promptly."

There are some shocks that cannot be absorbed all in one swift stroke. And so now, in the first hideous second, I did not take in the full horror of Erinnu's words. But as I stood staring at her implacable, smiling face, and remembered last night's dreams of Rebo and how she had called to me and held out her arms in appeal and how I had had the sensation of tight fingers pulling at my throat, then suddenly the whole appalling truth swept over me.

"She died swiftly—and suffered little," stated Erinnu.

AS WHEN a river bursts its banks, the full flood of my grief and desolation had overwhelmed me. In a flash of fury, when it came to me that Rebo was gone and that I had been responsible for her death and should never see her again, the love which I had thought dead came stabbing at me, and such sorrow as I had not believed possible filled and overflowed my heart, and my shoulders heaved, and I began to weep with a terrible, heartbreaking grief.

Pitilessly, as I tried to control the outburst, Erinnu stood above me. Not compassion but contempt was expressed in those mysterious black eyes, now grown unspeakably cold and remote.

"As I am a daughter of the high ones," she exclaimed, in a voice that rasped just slightly, "what does this mean? Instead of bowing down to the ground and thanking me as you should, you weep like a baby! I thought you were a man, Tamman!"

I said nothing; I cared little what she might think.

"But do you not see," she urged, her tones becoming softer and a trifle wheedling, "I am your deliverer! We are free now, you and I! Your road lies open before you! Dry your foolish tears, and I will speak to my father Urzun—"

It was strange how suddenly all her fascination had vanished; strange how clearly I saw her now for what she was—a ruthlessly cruel, designing, self-indulgent daughter of vice and luxury; a murderess, the slayer of my poor Rebo, who was really worth more than a thousand Erinnus. Through her I too was a murderer—a co-murderer of Rebo. And at this thought I was transfixed by remorse; and all my love for the temptress, which I now knew to be not really love at all but passion, became converted into hatred; she seemed more loathsome than all the toads of the courtyard or the snakes of the desert.

Carried away by fury, I let my feelings pour forth in a reckless storm. What words I used I do not recall, but I know that the short, ugly, snarling terms common among mule drivers and goat herders became mixed in my speech; that the epithets "Serpent!" and 'Scorpion!' flew in a frenzy out of my lips; that I cursed Erinnu by all the gods of my ancestors and all the powers that reigned in heaven and earth. As I spoke, I was almost gratified to see how her face hardened; how indulgence gave place to incredulous anger, and anger to resentment and pain as of a person unexpectedly stabbed.

When I had finished, she bit her heavy underlip and held back the tantrum which I had courted.

"So! By great Bel!" she answered, with what I knew to be deceptive calm. "I should have known better than to grant my favors to the scum of the alleys. It is well that, dashing down the gifts I have offered so liberally, you have awakened me in time. Yes, it is well, Tamman! I owe you much gratitude!"

All at once her eyes smoldered into fire. She took a step toward me. "Be sure I will repay my debt of gratitude—with interest like that of the usurers of the town! No man speaks as you have done to the daughter of Urzun, and goes away unrewarded! You will have not long to wait!"

She rapped her hands together furiously, then beat with a sort of clapper against the wall. And, a minute later, the armed guards had thrust their way in.

Beyond that, my recollection grows pale. I have an impression of being dragged off, with something thick and heavy over my mouth and eyes; I recall hearing the coarse oaths and jests of the soldiers. I know that I was taken a considerable distance away, while my body was prodded and pierced by the points of spears; then—hours later, or days, or perhaps only minutes, for a confusion lies over this period—there came a por-

tentous silence; after which I heard a voice calling, "Ready!" and, an instant later, felt myself being hurled through the air, felt myself plunging bewilderingly into something cool and wet, gasping and floundering, with heavy weights drawing me down; then a struggle that seemed endlessly protracted . . . agony . suffocation . . . darkness . . . nothingness .

I REVIVED to find myself safely at home, in bed, at Marjorie's side. And I pressed toward her slumbering form with the tenderness that we feel toward something infinitely dear that has been lost and then, long afterwards, regained.

I knew that I had undergone something more than a dream. With the impressions indelibly stamped on my mind, I began consulting books of history. But only after days of searching in a large library did I find what I sought, and recognize the details of the life I had witnessed so vividly. Down to the minutest item—from the nature of the cities to the construction of the buildings, the style of the costumes and the very names of the gods—there was one country that corresponded with what I had experienced; corresponded with an accuracy beyond the power of chance to approach. I had relived a scene from the life of ancient Babylonia!

More than that, now I could realize the part that I had played, the part that Marjorie also had filled; I could understand that we had both existed before in other bodies. And as for that unknown woman of the subway—I recognized who she too was, and why she had startled both Marjorie and me with such aversion and horror. And as I held my wife in my arms, glad of a present love that somehow was all the deeper for the shadow of past tragedy, I was thankful that we no longer had anything to fear from the wiles or vengeance of Urzuns' terrible daughter.

The Hidden Talent of Artist Bates

BY SNOWDEN T. HERRICK

WHEN Mr. John Haslet Bates was 20 and a student at the New York Art Student s League, he dreamed of Monet, Manet and Millet, and *la vie de Boheme de* Greenwich Village. At the age of 33 he had achieved a wife, three kids, the left half of a two-family house in semi-suburban Queens Village, and a career with

After all, doesn't an artist dabble in a kind of sorcery?

64 Heading by John Giunta

Waxman, Flaxman, Carmichael and Oglethorpe, Inc., an advertising agency specializing in menswear, womenswear, sportswear and infantswear.

THE particular task of artist Bates was to add to sketches drawn by other artists of men, women and children clad in garments of varying degrees of intimacy appropriate backgrounds. For instance, the man at the next desk in the W. F. C. & O. art department would draw a picture of a luscious damsel clad in a Beautiform Foundation ("builds you up without a letdown"). Bates would create around this gorgeous item a Chippendale boudoir and a feeling of frustration.

Because Bates' soul still harbored an ambition: to draw the figures as well as the backgrounds. Unfortunately, in common with many artists. Bates was unable to draw a human being that looked like anything but a self-portrait. What's more, he was always the only one who couldn't see the resemblance. Since he was personally distinguished by an Adam's apple that protruded beyond his chin, his involuntary self-portraits were scarcely of commercial value. In landscapes he was the Cezanne of the ad world; in figures he should have stuck to finger painting.

The man who was aware of this crippling weakness in Bates' artistic armory was thereby responsible in Bates' mind for dooming the poor draftsman to a life of inanimate objects, and he hated him with a hatred as intense as his Adam's apple was prominent. The target of this consuming feeling was his art director, Mr. Clifton Oglethorpe, vice-president of W. F. C. & O. in charge of the art department. Oglethorpe was a man who wore sincere neckties until the publication of "The Hucksters" sent sincere neckties out of fashion in the advertising business. He was as unaware that the drab little artist hated him as he was convinced that "Advertising Is the Life Blood of the American Way of Life."

The great day of John Bates came in the summer of 1948—but he did not realize it at the time. New Yorkers remember it well, because that was the day the tower fell off the Empire State Building. An unsuspected structural fault, the investigators said, weakened by the incessant swaying of the world's tallest building.

On that day Bates was handed a picture of two implausibly handsome men wearing Heart o' Hollywood LEEsure jackets. His job was to place them in a New York skyline setting, to indicate, perhaps, the coast-to-coast stylishness of the jackets. He quickly penciled in the skyline, with windows suggested here and there, and sent it on its way through the channels of W. F. C. & O.

In about 30 minutes Clifton Oglethorpe bounded out of his office, furnished with blond-wood desk, bar and bookcase, and lined with proofs of prize-winning ads. Carrying the skyline and jacket drawing between his fingers, he fluttered it in front of Bates' Adam's apple.

"For God's sake," he snapped. "Are you blind, Bates?"

"Yessir," said Bates, out of habit.

"Can't you see that this space is reserved for the copy? We've got enough trouble trying to fit in the trade mark, the slogan, the store name, the firm name, the fabric name, the address and the price without your sticking the Empire State Building up there."

"Yessir," said Bates.

"Dammit all, you fix that right up. We've got to get it approved in fifteen minutes."

"Yessir," said Bates.

The artist bared his teeth at the receding figure of the art director, picked up his art gum eraser, and savagely erased the tower of the Empire State Building. At that precise instant, the great collapse occurred which was to leave the Chrysler building without peer.

Bates, working in an office in the East Fifties, didn't learn about the disaster on 34th Street until he was reading his evening paper on the subway to Queens. By then it was too late to put two and two together.

A FEW days later a similar incident took place. Bates was, as usual, doing a background job, this time in Radio City. The ad would show a group of youngsters wearing Kiddiekins Snosuits peering over the edge of the sunken plaza at the foot of the RCA Building. Bates was sketching the sprawling statue of Prometheus surrounded by the

circle of the zodiac (or escaping the wedding ring, as local mythology has it).

In drawing the gilded Titan he was having trouble with the rock upon which Prometheus is precariously balanced. Reflecting that this was probably the closest he would ever get to drawing a figure, he rubbed out the rock. The famous Greek promptly dove into the fountain.

Bates was happy to be present at this interesting event, but he still didn't catch on. The great revelation of his hidden talent was scheduled for that very night, when he was working late and alone at the office.

Bent over his sloping drawing board, Bates was afflicted simultaneously by the stifling darkness of the night, by his secret yearning and by his hatred of Oglethorpe. His model was an elaborately embroidered peacock tapestry draped on an easel. Before him was a sheet of paper bearing a menswear masterpiece Bates had had no part in —a picture of a pipe-smoking, supercilious young man wearing a gaudy necktie. Forming a border around the ad-to-be were many more gaudy ties ("Tw-w-w-ist them, pul-l-l them, thr-r-r-ow them in the furnace"). Roughed-out lettering said: "Be a peacock . . . attract the female of the species," followed by an idiot row of exclamation points.

It was up to Bates to copy laboriously the peacock in the white space reserved for it alongside the young man. He found it very discouraging. He didn't like working late, anyway, because it interfered with his efforts to keep the left side of his two-family garden more productive than the rival right side. Furthermore, he considered it rank injustice for Oglethorpe to put a landscape man to work on a silly fowl when the art staff included a perfectly good bird, beast and baby man. Finally, the drawing wasn't going well at all. The tail was way out of proportion.

With a quick, peevish swipe, he drew his art gum across the offending tail feathers. As he did so, he heard a tearing noise. It wasn't the paper, thank God, and then he looked up at the embroidered peacock and trembled. Matching perfectly the erasure mark was a rip through the peacock's tail. Bates nervously dropped the art gum and sat back in his chair. He stared at the mutilated cloth and at his drawing. He fumbled with his pencil. He picked up the rubber square and looked at it. He very lightly brushed the peacock's head on the paper. The embroidered head dimmed. He rubbed harder. A hole appeared in the cloth. He stopped to think.

In his not especially perceptive mind, John Haslett Bates lined up the peacock and the diving statue. Then he reached back and added the Empire State incident. There was no getting away from it: this nonentity of an advertising artist, slave to a huckster, was not as other men. With a flick of his wrist he could literally erase buildings.

OTHER men might have had other thoughts, but Bates' first reaction on discovering his new talent was not an exalted one: how was he to explain the damage to the peacock? An idea came. He hastily completed his drawing, hoping it would be acceptable. Then, on another piece of paper, he copied the peacock and the cloth it was on, faithfully imitating every fold. With the eraser he obliterated the drawing of the fabric. When he was through the easel was bare. As he swept up the dust, he thought, "they can ask me where it is. The last I saw of it was tonight, when I went home."

For the sake of his explanation he went down the elevator empty-handed. On the ride home he paid little attention to his paper (which carried a picture of Prometheus on his belly) and on his arrival he neglected children, wife and garden. His wife remarked that he was working too hard. He laughed, the first time he had ever laughed at that suggestion.

The laughter continued, in secret, and in secret the mousy Bates became a practical joker. On the subway in the morning a woman's hat with three pomegranates and two pheasant's feathers tickled his nose. He sketched it on the margin of his paper, erased it, and it crumbled around her ears —to her consternation and loud cries.

One evening his neighbor made an unfortunate comparison of the two gardens. From behind a curtain Bates drew and erased the neighbor's highest hollyhocks and biggest roses. He derived considerable satisfaction from the determined war on Japanese beetles which followed.

But this was petty stuff for Bates. He

wanted to draw figures and he wanted retaliation for the indignities he had suffered from Oglethorpe. And then one day he had his answer.

He would draw two pictures. One would be a fashion drawing for the new College-Tex Fruit of the Lamb Clothing account ("climb out of that barrel and get into a College-Tex—the *Class* of the Year"). This he would present to Oglethorpe to prove his ability. The concept of the other picture was a triumph of the Batesian imagination. This drawing would be a carefully done portrait of Clifton Oglethorpe himself—complete to the cutaway collar and sunlamp tan. If Oglethorpe should reject his request for advancement, woe to Oglethorpe. An eraser operation on his picture would be much more enjoyable than sticking pins in a wax image.

BATES worked late all week on his project and both drawings were finished by Monday morning. The clothing drawing looked very handsome to him; considering the subject, he couldn't say the same for the Oglethorpe portrait. Clearing his throat and adjusting his tie, he picked up the fashion art and went in to see the vice president in charge of the art department.

"Mr. Oglethorpe," he began.

"Yes," said Oglethorpe.

"Mr. Oglethorpe, I'd like you to look at this picture for the College-Tex account. I'm sure I can do figures now, and I wish you would give me another chance to draw something besides backgrounds."

Oglethorpe took the picture, examined it, and smirked.

"Bates, you've still got your old trouble. Look at that Adam's apple; a customer for College-Tex Fruit of the Lamb doesn't want to think he looks like *that*. Until you can stop drawing pictures of yourself, you'd better stick to furniture and landscapes."

Bates felt the top of his head grow warm, and with a mouse's fury he scampered out of the office. He sat down at his desk and mumbled, "I'll show him, I'll show him."

He picked up the drawing of Oglethorpe and said to himself: "Doesn't like Adam's apples, eh? I'll fix *his* Adam's apple."

Fiercely he drew his eraser across Oglethorpe's penciled throat—and slumped over his drawing board, the blood streaming from his own neck. He hadn't been able to draw anyone but himself. His portrait of the art director looked exactly like John Haslett Bates.

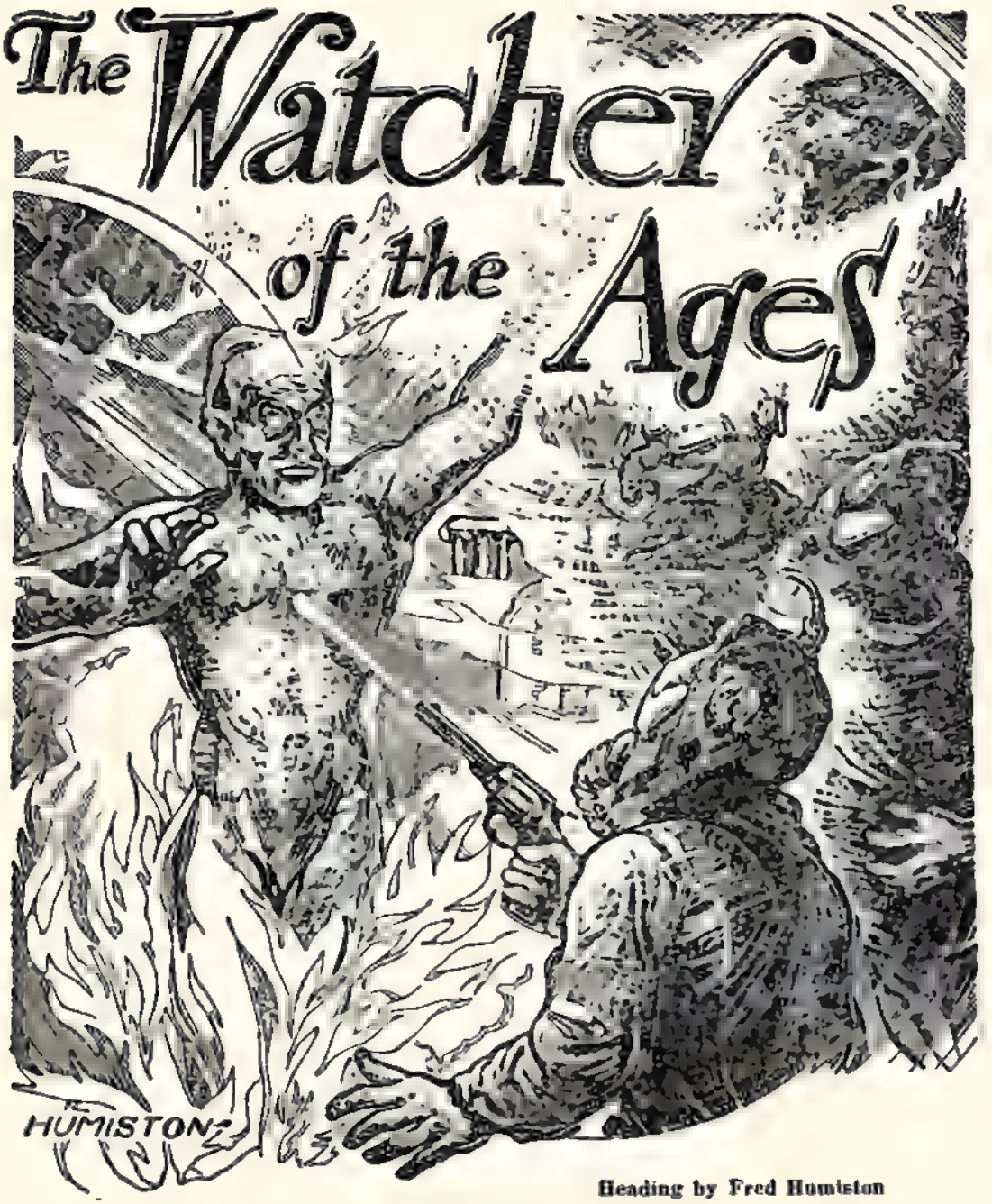
The River

By DOROTHY QUICK

DOWN by the river early, early,
Under the lowering unclear light,
The rising sun is surly, surly
And nothing's distinct or over-bright,
It's then the river dances, dances
With water the moon has driven mad
And willow trees send glances, glances
That are unearthly, cold and sad.

Down by the river slowly, slowly
The sun will rise, the dancing cease,
The willow trees bend lowly, lowly
As the river once again knows peace.

The Watcher of the Ages



Heading by Fred Humiston

STANDING in the dusk of that ruined, long dead city in the Brazilian wilderness, I read aloud again the inscription that was a voice from the remotest past.

"To the men of after ages, this warning of Thaul of Y'or' Seek not the hidden secret, the cold flame that burns forever . . ."

I asked Foltansbee, who stood beside me, "Do you suppose that warning is *true?*"

BY EDMOND HAMILTON

"Seek not the hidden secret, the cold flame that burns forever. . . ."

He looked at me a little scornfully. "What kind of geologist are you to believe such nonsense, Adams?"

"I don't know," I murmured. "I've been in this Matto Grosso country before, and there are queer things in it."

"Though you see him not, there is an undying Watcher who guards that secret from evil men, and whose eyes even now are upon you!"

We were standing in the bush-grown quadrangle that had been the central plaza of the ancient city. Before us, in front of the shattered north portico, loomed the column on which was graven the inscription.

It was past sunset, and the rapid tropical twilight was fast deepening. In the dusk, the ruins loomed dark and solemn around us. It was a ruin as impressive as Angkor, this dead city in the Matto Grosso jungle.

Great colonnades and walls of massive stone, riven and shattered, and streets of stone houses empty and dead, rose starkly from orchid-laden trees and undergrowth. Low, rocky mountains rose a few miles northward. Around it, stretched the great forest.

This dead metropolis had been lost to the knowledge of the outside world ever since it had been found by Portuguese *bandeiristas* in 1753. Many had searched for it in the intervening two centuries, lured by the account of those hardy old goldseekers which is still preserved in the National Library of Brazil.

The trackless jungle had defeated them all. And some, it had simply swallowed, like the famous Colonel Fawcett who in 1925 had made a determined final attempt to re-discover the dead metropolis.

Fawcett had believed that the ancient Portuguese' accounts of "a light that shone and never went out" were based upon some development of atomic science by a South American civilization of the most ancient past. The explorer had said so, in his last cablegram to a London newspaper before he disappeared.

"This tale suggests that the ancient South Americans had rays, perhaps unknown to modern science, in the research of the atom," he had cabled, before plunging into the wilderness, never to return.

Finally our own party, the Pollock-Stinson Geological Expedition, had taken up the search. The clue that Fawcett had followed seemed to indicate the presence of radioactive minerals near the lost, dead city. And such minerals were important in these days of released atomic energy.

Dr. John Pollock, eminent geologist, headed the expedition. But it had been organized and really led, so far, by that aggressive mine-promoter, Victor Stinson. He was to have full rights to all minerals other than radioactive ones, which were discovered.

Follansbee and I were the associate geologists. I had been accepted despite my lack of scholarly titles, because I had been in the Matto Grosso region before.

THERE is no need to tell of the months we had spent fruitlessly searching the vast region between the Tapajoz and Xingu Rivers. Time after time we had gone astray. The expedition would have been abandoned had it not been for Stinson. He was a ruthless driver, and he had kept us and our Indians going until finally he came upon the dead city.

He and Dr. Pollock were hopeful now of soon finding the radioactive deposits which legend placed near here. They had scoffed at this ominous warning inscription whose translation I had read for them.

"How can anyone tell what that queer old pothook writing means?" Stinson had demanded incredulously.

"Reproductions of this writing are in the old Portuguese manuscript in the National Library, and have been studied and deciphered," I told them.

And now I again translated aloud, as Follansbee and I stood facing the ancient inscription in the deepening twilight:

"I, Thanl of Yor mastered the secret of the cold fire that can kindle life. And with it, I kindled life in the lifeless semblance of humanity that I had made with my skill. I created one who is manlike but not man, one not mortal like us but undying.

"But the greed and ambition of the people of Yor made them covet my secret. They, too, wished to create life, and for evil purposes. Therefore, I used the powers that were mine to shatter this city, Yor, forever.

"I shall die soon. But I shall leave behind me one who will be faithful to my command, who will prevent evil men from ever using the cold fire. Yes, I shall leave behind me the undying one I created, the Watcher who will protect the secret for all the ages to come! You who read, beware—for the Watcher's eyes are upon you now!"

Follansbee said skeptically, when I had finished, "A fine old piece of superstition!"

I reminded him, "Yet we came here looking for radioactive deposits. And the 'cold fire' it refers to, can only be such."

Follansbee shrugged his lanky shoulders. "Personally, I think Stinson has backed a wild-goose chase. It's a fine trip for us geologists. But I wouldn't invest my dough in ancient legends."

He added, grinning, "Especially legends about creating a synthetic human being, a Watcher who is undying."

He had raised his voice. And as we turned away, from all the dark, looming walls around us the echo murmured back through the dusk.

" . . undying undying . . ."

I said no more as we walked back to camp, for Follansbee was a born skeptic.

Camp had been pitched amid the ruins in an open space that had a spring. In one of the open-sided thatched huts that had been run up, Dr. Pollock and Stinson were going over maps by lantern-light. Slavin and Geer, the two burly trail-bosses, were preparing supper.

Our Indian pack-porters had built their huts a little distance away. They were gathered there now near a fire, a dozen stocky, copper-skinned Bororo tribesmen. They were squatting around a cinnamon tree in whose side they had cut a rude ladder, and they were very silent.

Stinson came out of the hut and nodded his bullet head brusquely toward the silent, squatting Indians.

He said to me, "You know something about the Indians of this country, Adams. What are they up to?"

"They're holding a *ngillatun*," I told him.

"And what's that?"

"It's a divination ceremony. They're going to ask their dead ancestors for advice. I think they're afraid of these ruins."

Stinson made a sound of disgust. "A lot of damned mumbo-jumbo. This place reeks with it."

Two of the Bororos had started to play the ceremonial flutes, a thin, wailing sound. Another had dug a small hole at the base of the sacred ladder-tree, the *rewe*.

He held a trapped bird over the little excavation. A knife flashed, and the bird's blood dripped slowly into the hole. The flute wailed on.

Stinson led the way back into the hut, where Dr. Pollock's thin, aging, scholarly face was still bent intently over the maps they had been drawing.

"As I see it," Pollock said, "any radioactive or other minerals here must be in the mountains out there. If there's uranium or thorium ores there, the Geiger counters will soon tell us."

Stinson nodded curtly. "We'll start combing thaat little range with the Geigers, in the morning."

Pollock looked out into the gathering night. "The stones of this city must have been quarried there. I wonder how many thousands of years ago that—"

BEFORE he could finish there came an interruption. A sudden loud burst of shouts from the Indians.

"Slavin, what the devil's the matter with them now?" demanded Stinson angrily.

The trail-boss stuck his shaggy head into the hut. "Looks like they've got all excited about something, Boss."

Stinson cursed and strode out of the hut. We followed him toward the Bororos.

I saw at once that the *ngillatun* was over. The Indians were talking excitedly among themselves, and were obviously frightened.

"You know their lingo, Adams. Ask them what's eating them now," Stinson ordered.

I obeyed. The Bororo leader was sullenly silent for a few moments, but finally made guttural answer.

I turned back to the others. "He says that their dead ancestors have warned them—have warned them *that in this city there is someone who is not human.*"

There was a little silence among us. And in that silence, the Bororos were looking uneasily around the dark, looming ruins.

"That's very odd, when you remember that inscription," Pollock said thoughtfully.

And he repeated its phrases, ". . . the unlying one whom I created . . . the Watcher whose eyes are upon you now. . . ."

He added slowly, "There could have been a strange, ancient science in this city long ago. But I suppose not even it could have created an undying, synthetic man, or android."

"You can just bet it couldn't have," Stinson said harshly. "The damned Indians heard us talking about that inscription, that's all. They know a lot more of our language than they let on."

"Sure, that must be it," the burly Slavin chimed in.

The Bororo leader spoke again to me, briefly and sullenly.

"He says," I told the others, "that they won't stay here long. And that they won't go near the mountains, which are supremely accursed."

The information elated Stinson. "Then that's a sign the deposits we're after *are* over in those mountains!"

He said, "We won't need them for our prospecting over there, so you can tell 'em that. And the boys and I will soon teach them a lesson if they try to run away."

We retired early to the huts, for Stinson intended to start at dawn. As I removed my boots and stretched out in my hammock, I saw Follansbee's lanky figure still standing outside, staring into the darkness.

"Are you wondering if there's really a Watcher lurking out there?" I asked him.

"Don't be absurd," he retorted. "Yet I am wondering how the Indians got the idea in their heads. I could swear none of them understand English."

NEXT morning when I went out of the hut into the dank, gray dawn, it was Follansbee, already up, who met me. And his face now was queer.

"Adams, something's happened! During the night someone got into the supply-hut, tore open a locked steel instrument-case by main strength, and smashed all the Geiger counters!"

I hastened after him to the supply-hut. The other were there, and Stinson's square face was red with fury.

The heavy steel case lay on the ground, its whole end ripped open. The Geiger counters it had held were now a mass litter of broken metal on the floor.

"The case was locked, and I had the key," Pollock was saying bewilderedly. "But somebody just ripped it open."

"The damned Indians," Stinson accused harshly. "Their crazy superstitions made them do this to stop us."

"The Bororos wouldn't even know what a Geiger counter is," I objected. "And they wouldn't be strong enough to rip a steel case like a cardboard box. That took superhuman strength!"

STINSON turned on me. "It was this Watcher of yours, I suppose? This undying, synthetic man?"

He made an angry, derisive sound, and then continued, "But the superstitious idiots haven't stopped us. I had a Geiger in my pack, in case I wanted to prospect along the trail. And they didn't get that!"

He planned curtly. "We'll get started for those mountains, before the brutes can think up more sabotage to stop us. Geer, you'll stay here with a gun handy to watch them while we're gone."

By sunrise, we were tramping out of the bush-grown ruins toward the low, rocky range northward. The burly Slavin led the way, his machete slashing a path for us through the jungle. We all wore pistols at our belts, and Stinson carried the last, precious Geiger in his own hands.

It was already stickily hot by the time we came out of the jungle onto the lower slopes of the range. The mountains were impressive now—frowning cliffs and scarps of dark rock, split by cracks and crevasses.

Pollock looked slightly depressed as he studied the strata. "It's not the sort of formation in which you'd expect to find uranium or thorium."

"The Geiger will tell us," Stinson retorted. "We'll start working our way westward along the range."

For hours, we moved slowly along the lower slopes of the mountains. Stinson carried the Geiger, and watched it constantly. But it gave no indication of the nearness of radioactivity.

He swore viciously. "With the other counters we could have split up and covered the whole range in a few days."

Follansbee looked at me with a shade of worry on his lean face as we went on.

"What do you think could have torn that steel case open, Adams?"

I shrugged. "I don't want to speculate."

"What gets me," he said, "is that it must have been done very *slowly*, so as not to make a noise. No human being ever had such strength as that."

At that moment came an exultant shout from Stinson, ahead of us. He had stopped in front of a narrow crack that here cleft mountain.

"Listen to this!" he exclaimed, as we hurried up to him.

There came a click from the Geiger. And then, after a few moments, another one.

Stinson behaved now like a hound on a scent. He strode forward along the cliff, then back the way we had come. The Geiger fell silent.

He went into the narrow cleft in the cliff. And immediately the Geiger clicked again.

"It's somewhere in here! Come on!"

Slavin led the way with a flashlight. For the crack in the cliff was a mere crevice leading into the dark heart of the mountain.

The tempo of the Geiger's clicking rapidly quickened, until it became a steady rattle.

"We're getting close!" Stinson exclaimed.

Then Slavin suddenly recoiled upon us, and shouted. "Look out—there's a step-off!"

His flashlight showed a dark, empty abyss ahead.

We got down on our knees, and crawled carefully forward to the brink of the abyss.

IT WAS a vast, dark emptiness that lay before us—a gigantic natural pit that dropped far down into the roots of the range.

And down there on the floor of the pit, far, far below, there was a strange blaze of luridly opalescent light.

"Radioactivity to the *n*th degree, down there!" Pollock said, awedly. "No wonder the Geiger's gone mad!"

"We can get down!" Stinson said eagerly. He had been angling the flashlight beam downward. "Look at that path!"

Just a little below the brink on which we crouched, was a little projecting ledge of rock. From it, there led downward a steep, narrow path in the rocky side of the pit.

"That path was *cut!*" Follansbee said. "Someone long ago made it, to go down to that center of radioactivity. Do you suppose that means—"

"Let's have no more crazy talk about Watchers and all that, now that we've got our hands right on what we're after!" Stinson flared.

"We can't go down into radioactivity like that," I protested.

"Yes, we can," Pollock contradicted. "I included protective suits in our equipment, in case prolonged work with radioactive materials became necessary."

"Follansbee, you and Slavin go back and get them," Stinson ordered. "We'll wait for you."

We waited, out at the entrance of the cleft. By mid-afternoon, the two returned with the protective garments.

They were merely coveralls that had quilted lead foil sewn inside their linings, and had cowl-like hoods of similar fabric.

The garments were loose and bulky but not oppressively heavy. When we had put them on, Stinson led the way back to that precarious path into the pit.

Follansbee had brought more flashlights, and their beams helped us to climb safely down to that little ledge, one by one. Then, necessarily in single file, we started down the path.

We hugged the rock closely as we followed the steep, narrow trail. It dropped down the side of the vast pit in a zigzag.

The flashlights' beams were lost in the awesome darkness of that place. But steadily the lurid, opalescent glow of light far below seemed to grow stronger.

"I think we've made the biggest radioactive-mineral strike ever!" Stinson exulted, as he led downward. "It could be worth millions—"

"It isn't a question of monetary value," Pollock reminded him. "All radioactive minerals we find go to the University laboratories, by our agreement."

"And I get rights to anything else we find," Stinson said. "Sure, I remember."

I was the last in line as we descended the dizzy pathway. And I saw Follansbee, just

ahead of me, turn more than once to glance back up the way we had come.

I guessed what was in his mind. He was wondering if an unseen Watcher was following us down into this abyss.

IT TOOK us two hours to reach the bottom of the great pit. Upon its floor, Stinson and Pollock and even the brutal Slavin stopped and stared in amazement.

The pit was a half-mile across. And its floor and lower rocky sides were eerily lighted by the lurid, flickering glow that came from the thing at its center.

The rock floor there sank into a big bowl. And in that natural cuplike hollow, there smouldered and burned and brooded a domed mass of glowing rock. It was like a gigantic opal, blazing in sullen splendor here at the bottom of the abyss.

We stood, five strange figures in our bulky protective garments and cowled hoods and lead-glass goggles, staring at that glowing mass.

"Unprecedented!" whispered Pollock. "A late extrusion of primal radioactive matter from Earth's interior, into this buried pocket!"

Follansbee's voice was hoarse. "We're standing in radiation that would blast us, but for these suits."

Stinson paid them no attention. He seemed immune both to wonder and apprehension, gripped by a stronger emotion.

"There are things there—around the sides of that cup," he said eagerly. "By heaven—"

He started to run forward. Pollock shouted a warning, but the promoter paid no heed.

We followed, after a moment. We came to the brink of the cup, where Stinson and Slavin already stood.

Stinson pointed downward. "And I thought that inscription was just ancient nonsense. Look there!"

We saw what he saw. There were niches cut in the rock sides of the cup—a dozen of them, around that burning radioactive mass.

And in the niches were tables and pedestals of solid lead, upon which were lead and tungsten vessels and instruments. Some of these resembled modern scientific apparatus, but others were quite different.

"The laboratory of Thanl of Yor!" whispered Follansbee.

"It's true, then!" Pollock said dazedly. "There have been men of science on Earth in the lost past, as legend told. A science as great or greater than our own."

"You still don't *get* it!" Stinson cried. "Look at that thing on stilts, that glass mold!"

We looked. It was in one of the niches a little around the rim of the cup from where we stood.

It was a transparent, glittering mold of a man's body. It was raised upon leaden legs so that it stood in the very heart of the raging radiation—and it was empty.

Awe fell upon Pollock's face. "A mold of a human body. And the inscription of Thanl said—"

"That he'd created an undying synthetic man, an android! And had kindled life in his creation, by this terrific radiation!" Stinson finished.

Follansbee turned a white, stunned face toward me. "Then it's true, Adams! There was—there still *is*—a Watcher! A man born in this radiation, and left by Thanl to guard this place!"

His gaze roved the interior of the great pit, illuminated by the shaking splendor of the radioactive blaze before us.

"It *was* that Watcher, then, whom the Indians claimed was in the dead city, and who smashed our Geigers! He's somewhere near—"

"Is that all this means to you?" shouted Stinson. "Can't you see what we've stumbled upon?"

His voice was shaking with excitement.

"The secret of the creation of life, of the creation of synthetic men! It's all here, in these instruments and in this terrific radiation! A secret worth empires!"

We stared at him. In the shaking light, the man's square face was crimson with emotion.

"I don't understand you," Pollock said. "Such a secret of creating synthetic life would revolutionize biological science, yes. But how could it have any commercial value?"

Stinson laughed. The silent pit rang and echoed with that harsh laughter.

"You scientists that can't see beyond your

own laboratory walls!" he exclaimed. "By God, even Slavin here could see it!"

He rushed on. "What nation wouldn't give everything it's got for the secret of creating men—men who might not be quite human but who would be better than human for fighting a war?"

I saw comprehension come upon the faces of Pollock and Follansbee. I saw the same loathing that I felt, show in their features, as they stared at Stinson.

"You're joking," Pollock said thickly. "No man would seriously propose using this discovery for such a monstrous purpose."

"He's not joking," I said. "He means it."

Stinson stood, facing us with his hands on his hips, and seeming to enjoy that moment.

"Yes, I mean it. And what are you going to do about it?"

And then we saw that Slavin, in obedience to some private signal, had drawn his pistol and was leveling it at us.

Stinson stepped behind us, and took our guns from our belts. And then he stood before us again, and mocked us.

"You poor, pitiful fools! I always meant to do this, if we found anything worth taking. It's why I brought my own two men along."

"You never meant to live up to that agreement?" Pollock said, incredulously.

Slavin guffawed at that, and Stinson grinned. "The only good of that piece of paper was to get you to help me find this. And now its usefulness—and yours!—are over."

I do not think that Dr. Pollock, even then, comprehended the man's deadly intention. But Follansbee did.

"You're going to murder us? How will you explain that?"

"Easily," mocked Stinson. "There are so many accidents possible on a jungle expedition. I'll be very grieved when I tell you of your sad end. And I'll tell nothing at all of this discovery, except to the right people."

The veins of his neck corded, and his voice thickened. "The people, the country, that can pay the highest for a secret that will give them limitless expendable armies! Billions will be a cheap price for that!"

He had his own heavy pistol in his hand now.

"If you turn around," he said, "it will make it easier for all of us."

I spoke then. I said, "You've forgotten something, Stinson."

"Yes? What?"

I said, "You've forgotten the Watcher."

Stinson laughed. "If that Watcher still exists, Slavin and I will take care of him when he appears. But first, we'll take care of you."

"The Watcher has already appeared," I told him. "He's right here with us."

His face grew ugly. "Now I get it, Adams. You're going to yell, 'Look out, the Watcher is behind you!' And you think we'll be simple enough to turn around."

"No," I said, "the Watcher isn't behind you. He's right in front of you."

"I suppose he's invisible?" Stinson mocked. "I suppose I can't see him?"

"You can see him," I said. And then I said, "You're talking to him, Stinson. I am the Watcher."

THERE was a little silence.

Then Slavin laughed. He threw back his shaggy head in a guffaw, and Stinson's harsh laughter joined in.

"You, the Watcher?" Stinson said. "You poor fool, fright has turned your wits. You're just Lane Adams, the free-lance geologist we picked up in Rio."

"Yes," I nodded. "My name is Lane Adams now. But it hasn't always been that. I've had other names, in the past.

"I was Gonzales de Tormes of New Spain, a hundred-odd years ago. I was Henri Delaun, in medieval France. I was Tiberious Flavians in ancient Rome, and was the sea-captain Lurios in old Atlantis. Names? I've had hundreds of them, in the six thousand years I've lived.

"You see, I've wandered the world a lot in those sixty centuries. Through nations, empires, cities, watching them rise and rule and fall. I've seen all recorded history. And I've seen what men like you can do with power when they get it, Stinson."

Pollock and Follansbee were staring at me with the sick look of men who look upon one suddenly gone mad.

And Stinson and Slavin were grinning.

They, too, thought me crazy. And they were enjoying it.

"But if you're the Watcher who was left to protect this place, why did you leave it?" Stinson mocked.

I answered, "Thanl's secret was safe here after the jungle swallowed ruined Yor. It was only when the Portuguese first found this place, a couple of centuries ago, that I had to come back to this land to guard it.

"I've watched every expedition that tried to find this place—and have blocked or led them astray. Just as I led this one astray—only you insisted on coming on."

By now, I think, Stinson had begun to sense dimly that I was speaking truth. I think that the rage that flamed up in his face now was born of budding fear.

"So you're the Watcher, Adams? The undying one? Let's see if you're still undying, after this!"

His pistol roared. I felt the shock of the slug tearing through my chest. I felt the shock but no pain.

I stood, and smiled at Stinson.

"Yes, the bullet hit me," I told him. "It would have torn through a vital organ if I were a man.

"But I'm not a man, Stinson. Not a man like you. I don't have the vital organs you have, and a bullet through my tissues can't kill me."

"He's wearing a bullet-proof vest, or something!" shouted Slavin.

"No," I said. "I'm not. I'll show you."

I threw off the protective hood and coverall garment. I threw off my other clothing, and took off the false hair and eyebrows that I had always worn when among men.

I stood there before them what I was—an android, an artificial man, hairless, smooth-skinned, different. I stood in the raging radiation that would have killed a human being, and smiled at them.

"God!" said Pollock thickly. "Look at his chest—that wound—"

They were all looking at it—at the wound the slug had made in my rubbery, synthetic flesh. The wound, even as they watched, was slowly closing.

"He *is* the Watcher!" whispered Follansbee, staring wildly at me.

"He ain't human—we can't kill him!" yelled Slavin, his eyes bulging in fright.

But Stinson kept his nerve. "Not with pistols, we can't," he said harshly. "But there's some things even an android can't survive. *Throw him down into that radioactive fire!*"

He yelled that last to Slavin as he charged. The two of them came at me together with deadly intent.

I let them reach me. And just as they grabbed at me, my arms shot out and gathered them in.

The superhuman strength of my synthetic body, the strength that no human could ever possess, crushed them close to me.

Stinson, raging, had his hands around my neck trying to strangle me. To strangle *me*, who had no need to breathe! Slavin was hammering at my face.

I lifted them. And, disregarding their murderous assault, I half-carried, half-dragged them toward the brink of the sunken cup of radioactive fire.

Then I put forth all my strength. I hurled them down into that cup, straight down into the great, blazing, radioactive mass.

THEIR hoods had fallen back in the fight, and their unprotected heads plunged into that sullen, lurid glow. There was a short and terrible screaming.

And then, down there, there were only two black, dead forms withering in the burning blast of the deadly fires.

I turned slowly. Pollock and Follansbee stood, frozen by horror, staring at me.

"I'm not going to harm you," I told them. "I know you had no such sinister designs to exploit this secret as Stinson had. You can go."

Follansbee stumbled a step toward me. "Adams"—he began, and then choked—"Oh, God, you're not Adams! You're not a human man at all, at all!"

"No," I said. "I'm not a human man. I wasn't born of woman, but of fire and force and matter, and the skill of Thanl. And that was long ago."

Long ago? Yes, and all the accumulated weariness of those six thousand years seemed to press upon me as I spoke the words.

Six thousand years of memories pressing down upon me! Memories that began

in this same firelit pit where first I had awakened to life and consciousness and had looked up into the wise and gentle face of Thanl, my creator.

Memories of the evil people of Yor who had clamored for the secret of my creation, and of how Thanl had used his powers to shatter their city forever. And of Thanl, dying years later, and of my promise to him that I would watch over the secret of creation so that evil men might not attain it.

Of my wandering forth into the world, when Yor and the secret were safely locked in by jungle; of drinking wine with the other helmed sea-captains down in the harbor wine-shops of great Atlantis; of watching Esarhaddon lead the wolf-hordes of Assyria to the conquest of Egypt; of watching the Roman legions stamp out Carthage, of watching the kingdoms of Europe and Asia clash in combat from the Dark Ages until now.

War and ruin, dark ambition and pride and evil—how much of them had I not seen in those six thousand years I wandered the face of Earth! But now, I knew, my wanderings were about to come to an end at last.

I spoke to Follansbee and Pollock. I said, "Go now. And do not return to this place, ever."

"We won't," said Pollock hoarsely. "Nor will we tell the world of what lies here. It's better if men don't learn that now."

I watched them go, climbing shakily up the narrow path to the outside world.

Then I stood, alone, and looked around the firelit pit that had been my strange birthplace. Now, it was going to become my tomb.

For my resolve was taken. I had guarded this greatest secret of Earth for sixty centuries. I had done so because Thanl had believed that soon men would become wise enough to use this secret well.

But I, who have watched the races of man for six thousand years, knew better now. Not for ages, I knew, would man be worthy of this power of creation.

And I could not wait and wander for more long, long ages! I craved the rest of death that had always been denied me.

So I would seal up the secret. I could do it. Thanl's instruments here, which long ago he had taught me how to use, could cause a diastrophic convulsion that would collapse the whole mountain upon this pit.

Ages will pass before the forces of erosion will again uncover the secret fire of creation. By that time, man will have left brutehood behind him and will be worthy of this power. Either that, or he will have destroyed himself.

MY PREPARATIONS are made. Soon now, I shall release the forces that will cause the convulsion. And as destruction thunders down into the pit, I shall step into the radioactive fires whose radiation long ago kindled my life—the sullen fires which alone can consume and destroy my body.

But first, I have been writing this tale of my watch and the reasons for it. And the writing I shall encase and leave in an upper cleft of the mountain so that some day it will be found, and read, as a record and a warning.

Is it strange that I, the undying Watcher of the ages, look forward so eagerly to the rest of death. Perhaps it is.

And yet, I have a hope. I am no human man, but perhaps even an android can have a soul or spirit that will live on after death.

If it is so, then I shall soon see again the only man of men who ever loved me—wise Thanl, who created me long ago. I shall see him, and make report of how I performed the age-long task he laid upon me.

Or is my hope but a vain dream? I shall soon know.

Displaced Person

Heading by FRED HUMISTON

HE GLIDED out of the gathering dusk and seated himself at the other end of my bench and gazed absently across the lakes toward the Sherry Netherland. The setting sun had dribbled blood in the sky. Central Park was enjoying its eventide hush: there was only the rustle of leaves and grasses, the cooing of distant and

BY ERIC FRANK RUSSELL

A most unusual personage from a most unusual place!

shadowy couples, the muted toot of a bus way over on Fifth.

When the bench quivered its announcement of company I had glanced along it expecting to find some derelict seeking a flop. The difference between the anticipated and the seen was such that I looked again, long, carefully, out one corner of my eye so that he wouldn't notice it.

Despite the gray half-tones of twilight, what I saw was a study in black and white. He had thin, sensitive features as white as his gloves and his shirt-front. His shoes and suit were not quite as black as his finely curved eyebrows and well-groomed hair. His eyes were blackest of all; that solid, supernal darkness that can be no deeper or darker. Yet they were alive with an underlying glow.

He had no hat. A slender walking-stick of ebony rested against his legs. A black, silk-lined cloak hung from his shoulders. If he'd been doing it for the movies he couldn't have presented a better picture of a distinguished foreigner.

My mind speculated about him the way minds do when momentarily they've nothing else to bother them. A European refugee, it decided. A great surgeon, or sculptor or something like that. Perhaps a writer, or a painter. More likely the latter.

I stole another look at him. In the lowering light his pale profile was hawklike. The glow behind his eyes was strengthening with the dark. His cloak lent him majesty. The trees were stretching their arms toward him as if to give comfort through the long, long night.

NO HINT of suffering marked that face. It had nothing in common with the worn, lined faces I had seen in New York, features stamped forever with the brand of the Gestapo. On the contrary, it held a mixture of boldness and serenity. Impulsively I decided that he was a musician. I could imagine him conducting a choir of fifty thousand voices.

"I am fond of music," he said in low, rich tones.

He turned his face toward me, revealed a pronounced peak in his hair.

"Really?" The unexpectedness of it had me muddled. "What sort?" I asked feebly.

"This." He used his ebony stick to indicate the world at large. "The sigh of ending day."

"Yes, it is soothing," I agreed.

We were silent awhile. Slowly the horizon soaked up the blood in the sky. A wan moon floated over the towers.

"You're not a native of New York?" I prompted.

"No." Resting long, slender hands upon his stick, he gazed meditatively forward. "I am a displaced person."

"I'm sorry."

"Thank you," he said.

I couldn't sit there and leave him flat like that. The choice was to continue or go. There was no need to go. I continued.

"Care to tell me about it?"

His head came round and he studied me as if only now aware of my presence. That weird light in his orbs could almost be felt. He smiled gradually, tolerantly, showing perfect teeth.

"I would be wasting your time."

"Not at all. I'm wasting it anyway."

Smiling again, he used his stick to draw unseeable circles in front of his black shoes.

"In these days it is an all too familiar story," he said. "A leader became so blinded by his own glory that no longer could he perceive his own blunders. He developed delusions of grandeur, posed as the final arbiter on everything from birth to death, and thereby brought into being a movement for his overthrow. He created the seeds of his own destruction. It was inevitable in the circumstances."

"You bet!" I supported wholeheartedly. "To hell with dictators!"

THE stick slipped from his grasp. He picked it up, juggled it idly, resumed his circle-drawing.

"The revolt didn't succeed?" I suggested.

"No." He looked at the circles as if he could see them. "It proved too weak and too early. It was crushed. Then came the purge." His glowing eyes surveyed the sentinel trees. "I organized that opposition. I still think it was justified. But I dare not go back."

"Fat lot you should care about that. You'll fit in here like Reilly."

"I don't think so. I'm not welcome here

either." His voice was deeper. "Not wanted—anywhere."

"You don't look like Trotsky to me," I cracked. "Besides, he's dead. Cheer up. Don't be morbid. You're in a free country now."

"No man is free until he's beyond his enemy's reach." He glanced at me with an irritating touch of amusement. "When one's foe has gained control of every channel of propaganda, uses them exclusively to present his own case and utterly suppress mine, and damns the truth in advance as the worst of lies, there is no hope for me."

"That's your European way of looking at things. I don't blame you for it, but you've got to snap out of it. You're in America now. We've free speech here. A man can say what he likes, write what he likes."

"If only that were true."

"It is true," I asserted, my annoyance beginning to climb. "Here, you can call the Rajah of Bam a hyphenated soandso if you want. Nobody can stop you, not even a cop. We're free, like I told you."

He stood up, towering amid embracing trees. From my sitting position his height seemed tremendous. The moon lit his face in pale ghastliness.

"Would that I had one-tenth of your comforting faith."

With that, he turned away. His cape swung behind him, billowing in the night breeze until it resembled mighty wings.

"My name," he murmured softly, "is Lucifer."

After that, there was only the whisper of the wind.

To the Chimera

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

UNKNOWN chimera, take us, for we tire
Amid the known monotony of things:
Descend, and bearing sunward with bright wings
Our mournful weariness and sad desires,

Pause not to prove the opal shores untrod
Blow thee fading, and the fields of rose;
Till on thy horns of planished silver flows
The sanguine light of Edens lost to God.

There, for the weary sense insatiate,
Primeval sleep from towering scarlet blooms
Would fall in slow and infinite perfumes;

Or we could leave thy crystal wings elate,
Riding the pagan plain with knees that press
The golden flanks of some great centauress.

Death's Bouquet

BY PETER PHILLIPS

A lot goes into the making of good wine.

Heading by Fred Humiston

LEBRUN was not a big commerical wine-grower and his modest country house was not within a thousand miles of Bordeaux.

That's to forestall the experts. Given a hint, they would fret for further clues to the locale. Once I knew a man who at the first sip of a worthwhile wine might proceed to determine the very half acre of ground whence it originated.

The Lebrun family were once possessed of a less modest residence and a less common

patronymic; but at a certain period of the nineteenth century they found it expedient to relinquish both.

To the Lebrun of my acquaintance, that was a sad error. But since no attempt had been made up to the time of the Fourth Republic to rectify the matter and it then seemed beyond redress, he contented himself with impressing on his intimates that an aristocrat by any other name would still bleed a shade of blue when pricked.

He had little success in conveying the same impression to the half-score sturdy, spittle-handed workers who tended his shrunken acres; to his small household staff; or to the few cottagers who still reluctantly paid their rents to him.

If he had lived in the time of the Occupation, he would have been first on the list of district collaborateurs.

By killing him before the war, I probably saved the Resistance the trouble of shooting him.

He was a boor. A spindle-shanked, languid, gutless poseur. A thin, mincing, effeminate patronizing hypocrite. A veritable Gallic Pecksniff. But he had two assets in my opportunist eyes: his cellar and his daughter. He cherished and revered both.

I got to know father, daughter and cellar on one of my rare visits to the district as agent for a Paris-London bookseller. No doubt a bourgeois occupation in Lebrun's view; but I had mentioned certain great names. . . . So he dined me.

The first dinner was in the nature of a symposium of wines from the cellar, followed by a eulogy (in her absence) of motherless Heloise Lebrun.

I'm not even an amateur of wine. It's one of the few subjects connected with art—in this case, the art of living—about which one may say "I know what I like" without being marked down as an ignoramus and a Philistine. I can tell a Burgundy from a Bordeaux, or a Graves red from a Claret; but neither my memory nor my interest permit me to go further.

But women Lebrun's eulogy, after his daughter had left us to our coffee and fine champagne, was unnecessary. I was sufficiently impressed I had covertly appraised her with an earnest attention to detail.

Her charms were characterized by a curious and intriguing dichotomy of form and feature. It was as if the beautiful, long-haired head of a young Greek boy had been set on the body of a mature woman—Apollo's head on Aphrodite's shoulders. Yet the effect was not of disparity, but harmony; not of masculinity, but ultra-femininity.

There was no trace of common "prettiness" about the severe, classical planes of her face; and her jet hair—so black as almost to deny reflection from its gloss—was taken straight back from her high, cool forehead and caught up in a tight roll in the nape of her swan-slender neck.

She was tall, and the severe but flowing cut of her white gown enhanced the pressing roundness of body that contrasted so delightfully with the piquant handsomeness of her face. . . .

My visits to the district became less rare. . . .

However, inclination could find no opportunity for closer acquaintance with Heloise Lebrun.

Said one innkeeper in the district: "He guards her like a prize cow."

An unfortunate metaphor. But I forgave him.

Cows are dumb. So was the delectable Heloise, so far as I could ascertain. Her conversation, in a honeysweet voice, was strictly confined to the most mundane of small-talk.

Disappointing. Lebrun was to blame, apparently. On the death of her mother, he had cherished her to the point of stultification, warding off all outside influences—even to the point of bodily assaulting a young farmer-neighbor who had the temerity to exchange a few words with her without the formality of an introduction.

MY INFORMATIVE innkeeper also spoke of another young man, Theophile Morin, who, three years previously, had aroused Lebrun's paternal wrath to such a pitch that fearing the self-thought "lord of the manor" would hire an apache type to wreak displeasure, he had disappeared overnight from the district.

I couldn't reconcile this information with the impression I'd gained of Lebrun's character—an ineffectual old hedonist who'd

hesitate to harm a mouse in case it should bite him.

Anyway, to me he showed only his best side—and his best wines, some from his own acre of well-tended vines. He sold some casks of vin ordinaire and some bottles of a passable white table-wine in the district; but his main source of income was not from wine at all but from a special quality cider-perry, fermented in a huge vat from the crushed apples and pears of a large orchard —a technique he had studied in Devonshire, England.

The approach to the Lebrun mansion—several miles from the huge dilapidated chateau which he privately claimed as his true family seat—was through an unhedged avenue of young cypresses, with flat fallow fields on either side.

The house itself lay within a large enclosed garden. Vines—for decoration or dessert grapes I assumed, since the location was hardly suitable for wine grapes—were trained along the high gray southwestern wall.

The drive to the house was pleasant, and my thoughts were pleasant as I undertook it for what proved to be the last time. I'd done good business in the provincial town ten miles away; and Lebrun had invited me to stay the night after dinner. I hoped that this would give me an opportunity to try to elicit something more than the usual platitudes from the beautiful but subdued Heloise. I wanted to know whether she was dumb from weakness of intellect; or from disposition, inherent or imposed.

Lebrun usually had a few of his sycophantic cronies at the table when we dined; but on this early winter night—the dusk was deepening as I arrived—there were only the three of us, Lebrun, Heloise and myself, in the high-ceilinged over-furnished dining room, lit by a grotesquely out-of-place crystal chandelier. The table had begun its life in a rich monastery, and the chairs were fussy imitation Louis XVI.

Part from wine and food, Lebrun's ideas of taste, particularly in the matter of interior decoration, were pretentious.

YET the whole house, with its mixture of styles and periods, gave the impression of being merely demodé and commonplace —like its owner. No setting for mystery. No hint of horror to come in this character, or his surroundings.

So when horror came, its forces were trebled.

It came after dinner. There was nothing memorable about the dinner itself, save for an incomparable *Chateau Latour,* which I drank with reverence; and the continued silence of Heloise Lebrun.

In retrospect, however, I realize that I was vaguely aware of a curious tenseness about Lebrun's movements and speech throughout the meal. He was drinking more than usual, and when Heloise left us, he insulted a fine brandy by gulping a liberal measure as though it were a cheap cognac.

Then he stared at me across the table, and said: "She is a silent one, my Heloise. She broods. I believe she hates me."

This confidence, in a calm, conversational tone, embarrassed me. I muttered some deprecating inanity.

"You cannot conceive, my young friend," he said, "of the hatred that an only daughter may bear for an old father who loves her too well." He stood up, a thin figure in black. "You say nothing. . . . I surprise you? . . . Let us change the subject. I would value your opinion on a wine. Come with me."

He swayed a little as he went to the door. He was certainly drunk. I had seen his main cellar before, but he led me now to an alcove I had not previously noticed. There were about a dozen bottles in the bin. He withdrew one and cradled it gently in the crook of his arm. I wondered why he hadn't sent his old manservant for it.

His wrinkle-seamed face was white in the stark glare of unshaded light-bulbs. He might have been a grandfather caressing his tiny grandson. He touched the neck of the bottle. "An experiment," he said softly. "It was laid down two years ago today. It is very young, but I believe it will have great qualities when it matures. The potentialities of age are to be discovered in the youth of a wine. Tonight, we shall divine its future."

I followed him up the cellar steps. I wondered whether his hospitality was sufficient recompense for humoring a man I disliked; and I was beginning to feel that even access to the startling beauty of Heloise might not repay the efforts necessary to beguile her

from her moodiness. . . . This place was out of my way. I might make it my last visit. . . . I make no secret of my own self-seeking hypocrisy. . . .

We did not join Heloise, but returned to the dining chamber, where Lebrun made a fumbling and rather ridiculous ceremony of opening the bottle and pouring out two glasses of what I fully expected to be a raw and virtueless wine.

It was a pale straw color, with the slightest tinge of green, although this may have been imparted by the glass.

We sat opposite each other at one end of the table. From the way he raised his glass, we might have been about to sample a rare and precious vintage.

As I've said, I'm not even an amateur of wine; but I know that there is some delicacy of approach in the matter of tasting, and I was surprised when, after the most cursory attention to aroma, Lebrun suddenly tilted his glass and drained the wine as though it were a medicine.

Stranger still, by a compulsion I cannot explain, I felt obliged to follow his example, and swallowed mine without a preliminary sip.

My first very brief impression was of its sweetness. My second—as it constricted my throat and hit my stomach lining—was that it was one hundred per cent ethyl alcohol.

"Good God!" I choked, my eyes filling with tears. "It's a raw hooch. What a damn-fool trick—"

Lebrun's eyes were wide, unfocused. He shuddered. Then like a dead man released from stiffening bonds, his head lolled forwards and he slumped to the table. I heard the bump as his forehead hit the wood, and I stared rather stupidly at a bald patch in the center of his short, gray hair.

Even wood alcohol doesn't kill as quickly as that. Poison. . ? Was he dead, anyway? My throat cleared. The warm glow in my stomach spread with incredible rapidity throughout my body. My hands and feet tingled. I could feel a flush riding up over my face. . If he was dead, did it matter? Was I dying? I tried to rise, but my legs were stricken with an insidious weakness. But, of course, I wasn't dying. . . . Dying men don't want to laugh. The old fool had grabbed a bottle of newly distilled brandy by mistake and on top of what he had already taken, it had knocked him out.

But it shouldn't take me like that. I'd drunk hooch before. And no brandy could be as strong. Then why couldn't I get up . what an absurd weakness . . . especially since I felt as light as a bubble . a big bubble, drifting back through a tunnel of warm redness away from a bald patch on a man's head.

Those were my hands, clenched on the table, and my arms, attenuated, lengthening as I was drawn away. . . . If I grasped the table I could pull myself back to my hands, back to reality. Yet there was no reason why I should.

For there was nothing to fear.

There was a gentle purposiveness in this force that seemed to be withdrawing me from my corporeal self; a bidding that I had no desire to resist, as of a gentle far-away voice saying: "Come. You shall not be harmed."

My body was safe. It floated past me in the tunnel, back and head rejoining my hands, the arms foreshortening, until I saw myself at the table, slouched forward, head comfortably pillowed on arms. . . .

Then the warm red tunnel closed in, hiding the scene, and I became an awaredness, a focus of consciousness without magnitude, a point of observation without senses, save those borrowed from the being I observed, whose thoughts I also shared—the being who had called me from my body to be a witness and a judge to some unnamed crime.

I knew this, as I knew his name was Theophile Morin. I recognized him as I would recognize myself in a vivid dream, and was as much a part of him; a young man tall and strong, the secret lover of Heloise Lebrun.

* * *

HE WAS climbing—we were climbing—the ivied wall to the balcony of her bedroom. A thin crescent moon soared high in a black sky, casting deep shadows in the walled garden.

The windows were open. He stepped within. She was waiting for him, in the soft light of a shaded bedside lamp, arms outstretched.

His heart—my heart—leapt at the vision of unearthly beauty she presented. This was

not the beautiful but dull Heloise I had seen.

Her eyes glowed with love, desire, vivacious life; and her face, framed now by the loosened abundance of her black hair, was softened by the sweet hint of a blush. The slender but near-statuesque ripeness of her body in the sheerest of night attire was imbued with an ineffable grace as she came forward into his embrace.

I sensed, as in my own forgotten body, the surge and expectancy of his love as his arms enfolded her. They kissed, then she breathlessly spoke a passionate welcome. And I had thought her dumb.

The scene changed with cinematic suddenness. I was aware of the door of the bedroom, a-trembling; I sensed fear and anger intermingling.

The door burst inwards and Lebrun stood there, his long white face contorted with fury. To me in my state of supra-being, with a duality of consciousness, his emotion was a palpable and a wicked thing: it was a wave of insensate jealousy—not the pride of a father, the possessive love of a parent—but the wild, carnal jealousy of a cuckolded husband or a thwarted lover.

There was a black stick in his hand. He raised it, gestured. . . The scene was changed again; and Theophile Morin was walking down the hallway of the big house to the door. I knew Heloise had been locked in her room. . I knew that Morin was about to turn on Lebrun, stalking behind him, and demanded that she should not be punished. . . .

Then Morin was descending the stone steps into the walled garden, a tall, proud figure in the light from the doorway.

I knew what was to happen . what little control Lebrun still retained over his actions disappeared in a rush of wild and evil thoughts through his inflamed brain. . . . He stood three steps above Morin. . . . From the black stick he drew a slender blade.

Morin turned and saw—I saw—the blade plunging down toward him. He felt—I felt—the steel point thrusting deep into his body, the ingush of air through the wound that shocked the living tissue into a blaze of pain extinguished by death.

The incorporeal point of observation was not extinguished, however. I saw through the eyes of Morin's spirit, still bound to the crumpled hulk that was his body. . . . Saw Lebrun hasten for a spade, drag the body to a high wall and dig; his thin form jerking with a fierce energy.

And he dug a shallow grave near the roots of a vine, and scattered the rich displaced earth elsewhere; and the body lay quiescent, damp soil against the still-warm flesh.

A vigil began.

In time—time was all, and yet nothing—the flesh cooled, and the microbes of the soil

began their scavenging; saphrophytic bacteria that took the decaying flesh and in their blind, busy millions made carbon dioxide, nitrogen and thus, with moisture from the heavens, liquid foods. And the cut roots of *vitis vinifera,* the hungry vine, grew and stretched and sucked at the foods and made sap.

Through the winter months the vine fed and grew rich with sap from the body of Morin. Time was nothing, and dead flesh was manure to the soil from which all life springs.

And in the springtime sun, the sap was drawn up through the body and leaves of the living vine and into the green grapes, which grew fat and ripe in the warm sunshine. And I knew my vigil of a year—an hour—a second—was ending; and the tempo of my awareness quickened still more.

Lebrun came again to the vine and pointed to the grapes, which were taken and pressed; and their rich juice was fermented, fortified, aged, bottled and laid away in his cellar to mature.

What primeval vainglory was this . . . a civilized man, self-proclaimed aristocrat, following in warped fashion the instinct that told savage peoples to eat of the flesh of their enemies that they might acquire their strength ? No. It was pure bravado, a sadistic exulting—a declaration to himself that he need not fear any penalty for his evil.

But the grapes had absorbed a strange virtue from the rotting flesh of Theophile Morin whose restless and unfulfilled spirit accompanied my consciousness.

For two years, the wine lay. . . . Time was nothing. . And I was aware of the past—the immediate past—of myself accompanying Lebrun to the cellar, following him back to the dining room, accepting the glass from his hand, seeing his head fall so heavily forward; the bald patch. .

* * * *

AND I raised my own head from cushioning arms. Time is nothing, and a long dream—a dream of three years—may take but seconds.

I looked at the clock. A minute had passed perhaps. I went round the table, shook Lebrun's shoulder. His head lolled limply. But his heart was still beating. Alcoholic coma, I assumed.

I knew what I had to do. Although it may only have been a desire to reassure myself that I had merely suffered a drunken dream with no foundation in truth, I was affected by a sense of urgency.

The house was quiet. There was no sign of Heloise or the servants.

A full moon was rising in the cold November sky, giving sufficient light for my quest. There was a snow-spade in the tonneau of my car which stood in the driveway near the door. I took it out and without hesitation went to one of the vines at the southwestern wall and began to dig, carefully removing a layer of earth at a time.

A bare six inches was sufficient. . In the flicker of my lighter, I saw that scraps of clothing and some fragments of dark flesh yet unconsumed by the teeming soil still adhered to the bones I had uncovered.

The cold dampness of the earth seeped through to my knees as I knelt.

"Praying for his soul, my friend?"

In all reason I should have been startled. Yet somehow I was not even surprised. I rose and turned to face Lebrun. The blade from his sword-stick was leveled at me.

"It is time," he added, "to pray for your own."

In the deceptive moonlight, he looked even taller and thinner.

I said: "It was excellent wine. You took care to give your vine a well-nourished soil."

"I shall be pleased to introduce you to another product of mine. This way, please. My three servants are visting the town this evening; they left immediately after dinner. So if you thought of attracting attention—"

He was walking behind and a little to one side of me. I glanced back, smiling. "It's you who need help, Lebrun—not I. You may be mad, but I presume you value your neck. My company know my whereabouts."

"That may be so. But I shall abandon your car some distance from here. You will have left the house—and disappeared. An insoluble mystery. Your body will not be found."

"Heloise ?"

"My silent one is uncaring, apathetic . . ."

I'm sure I could have side-stepped Lebrun's blade at any time and disarmed him. Curiosity, not fear, kept me at its point. We

passed through a low, open archway on the further side of the walled garden and emerged in the shadow of a long, barn-like wooden building.

And he talked. Of his surpassing, but unreciprocated love for his daughter; of her particular beauties and the agonies he suffered when she deigned to notice young men; of the loving punishments he had inflicted on her body. . . I won't recall details. It was infinitely pathetic, but infinitely disgusting.

Inside the wooden building, he switched on a lone, bare light. I saw great bins of apples and pears, crushing machines, and, centrally, an enormous vat.

BROAD wooden steps led to a narrow platform around its rim, which towered up near the roof-joists. The acid-swept vapors of crushed, fermenting fruit tightened my throat for a moment.

He urged me politely up the steps. An uncomfortable parallel occurred to me; this was not unlike the approach to a gallows or guillotine. But curiosity still restrained action.

We stood on the narrow platform. With his left hand, Lebrun released a counterweight that slowly raised a huge lid covering the vat.

I saw, two feet from the top, the turgid surface of the liquor, flecked at intervals by the sluggish bursting of bubbles like marsh-gas from a disturbed pond.

"Lebrun's cider is scarcely inviting at this stage," said Lebrun conversationally. "But it possesses a curious quality." He nodded toward a joist over the vat. Several tiny, white skeletons of animals were arranged in a neat row.

"Rats, mice—picked clean by the corrosive action of the fermenting juices. Slower than inorganic acids in their action, perhaps, but just as certain. The quality of the product is not affected. If anything, it is improved. They were found when the vat was last drained, some years ago, for repairs.

"It is never completely emptied normally," he said. "Enough is retained to assist in fermentation of fresh liquor. Enough to cover your body."

I had learned the savate under the most eminent practitioner in Paris. . My toe caught Lebrun's wrist as he lunged. The blade slid past my left shoulder.

Off-balance, Lebrun fell with an echoing splash into the great vat. He slowly disappeared.

Then his gray head, with its absurd bald patch, bobbed ridiculously to the surface.

Choking, spitting, whimpering. . . . A little gasping scream: "Help me. . . . Help me! I can't reach . . ." He scrabbled madly at the wooden sides with his long, thin fingers.

I have said that I am a hypocrite. Indeed, in many ways, I am not at all a pleasant person: I enjoyed every moment of Lebrun's drowning struggles.

He finally slid beneath the surface with exquisite slowness, his white, vainly clutching hands submerging last of all.

The turbulence in the vat died away. The liquor became still, a dark mirror, disturbed only by sluggish bubbles of gas. Among them appeared a few brighter, quicker-bursting bubbles. I watched until they, too, ceased.

I went back to the house for my hat and coat. When I came out again, I saw a slender white figure standing at the side of my car.

Heloise. Her eyes were less dull.

She said, "I shall tell everyone that he was called away suddenly on a long journey."

"You know. ?"

She smiled.

I decided that I liked the daughter no better than the father. . . But I said, "Get some things together and come away from this place . . now."

She shook her head and looked toward the southwestern wall of the garden.

"I have a grave to tend."

I was next in the district with the 7th Battalion, the Homeshire Regiment shortly after D-Day.

I refrained from drinking any of the famous Lebrun cider-perry.

The Devil's Lottery

BY MARY ELIZABETH COUNSELMAN

PERHAPS the weirdest aspect of the case was that no two people in the entire city of "Blankville" gave the same description of the man.

He was seen—never anywhere else—on the corner of 1st and Main, with that small shabby portable table in front of him; really a folding suitcase with legs, such as pitchmen carry and set up to huckster their dubious wares. That much, at least, everyone agreed upon but no man could change his appearance and costume as often as all accounts insist that he did. "No *man* . .", as Jeff Haverty, city editor of the

Heading by JOHN GIUNTA

It was a strange little game, pointless perhaps to all but one

local newspaper, expressed it in his last editorial about the strange affair.

IT SEEMS to have been a young traffic cop stationed at the corner of 1st and Main who saw the man first—standing there motionless behind his pitch-table on the morning of Monday, November 3rd. According to O'Reilly, he was a fat oily red-faced individual with bowler hat and cigar, who looked like a city hall politician, the kind who can get an ambitious young officer promoted for fixing a certain ticket for speeding.

O'Reilly strolled over to him, twirling his whistle, and surveyed the contents of the table. There was little on it to indicate that the stranger was an ordinary pitchman—no bottles of spot-remover, no trick fountain pens, no overpriced toys for children. In fact, there was nothing on the portable stand except three neat piles of papers, small oblong sheets, stiff and rough like parchment. There was writing on the papers, flame-colored printing of a curious wavery nature that O'Reilly found hard to read. The print was archaic, resembling Old English—"not like nothing you see in the magazines or papers," as the young cop described it. He read the pamphlets, or tracts, if that was what they were, scratched his head, and fixed the street-hawker with his best professional scowl.

"What ye sellin', buddy? You gotta have a license in this town to . . ."

The man smiled slowly and met his look with the most striking pair of eyes O'Reilly says he has ever seen. Oddly enough, all describers of the man agree about those eyes—large, dark, deeply weary but with a glint of sardonic mockery that made one uncomfortable under their gaze. They seemed to penetrate to one's hidden thoughts and laugh knowingly at what they saw, as one woman put it.

"*I have nothing to sell but wisdom,*" was the stranger's reply. His voice, too, is a point on which everyone seems to concur; hollow, reverberating, and without inflection, like the voice of someone shouting down a well.

"Hmm! What ye advertisin', then?" O'Reilly demanded, unable to make heads or tails out of the three queer sentences printed on those papers.

"*Advertising? Perhaps . . . the power of evil and the futility of good,*" the deep voice answered, with a mocking chuckle that made O'Reilly want to smash a fist into his face. "*Or . . . perhaps I am only amusing myself . . .*"

"I don't get your angle," the young cop said gruffly, annoyed that his skin was prickling as though from an icy wind. "You ain't spreadin' no propaganda, are you, buddy? I got orders to pick up any foreign-lookin' character who . . . What *is* all this junk you've shovin' on the public?"

"*Call it a game. A contest. A lottery, if you will,*" the stranger intoned softly. "*Anyone may take a chance—man, woman, or child. The price is whatever you care to pay. Write your answer beneath each question; and return them to me with your name and address. Those who offer answers which are most pleasing to me shall receive a great gift!*"

O'Reilly frowned. "I still don't get your angle. What do the folks lose who don't win no prize?"

"*Only . . . their sense of values, perhaps,*" the stranger began to chuckle again. "*And you may be assured that all cash profits will be placed where the money will do the most good for this peaceful little city of 60,000 . . . souls!*"

Accenting the last word oddly, the stranger began to laugh in a way that made young Tim O'Reilly want to cross himself and stop up his ears, as he later told it. He had half a mind, he said, to run this obvious crackpot in for vagrancy or a trumped-up charge of disturbing the peace. But at that moment a coal truck rammed into a school bus, and he hurried away to unravel the resultant snarl in his morning traffic.

ABOUT noon, various accounts of the strange pitchman and his "lottery" began to trickle into the city room of the "Blankville" *News*. Jeff Haverty, always on the lookout for human interest items, sent a reporter to interview the man for his Sunday edition. He also sent his ace photographer, there being nothing for him to do that afternoon.

It was Bill Morgan, the reporter, who brought Haverty one of the little pamphlets, or lottery tickets, with the wavery red print-

ing. Haverty read, and laughed at, the three cryptic sentences inscribed thereon:

I. WHAT IS THAT WHICH ALL MEN SEEK TO HOLD BUT NONE MAY KEEP; WHICH SOME ARE BORN WITH, SOME KNOW NOT THAT THEY POSSESS, AND SOME NEVER TASTE; WHICH WEALTH CAN NOT BUY NOR TOIL EARN NOR WISDOM ATTAIN.

II. WHAT IS THAT WHICH ALL MEN HAVE IN PART BUT NONE IN FULL; WHICH ALL MEN FLEE BUT NONE MAY ESCAPE; WHICH EVERY MAN IS HAPPIEST WITHOUT YET SEEKS DILIGENTLY TO ACQUIRE.

III. WHAT IS THAT WHICH ALL MEN STRIVE TO DESTROY YET THEREBY OFTEN CAUSE MORE; WHICH ALL MEN THINK GREAT WHEN THEIR OWN BUT SMALL WHEN ANOTHER'S; WHICH OVERPOWERS EVERY OTHER FORCE IN LIFE, EVEN FOR THOSE WHO KNOW IT BEST.

"Three philosophical questions, eh?" Haverty commented, smiling. "They sound like something the Sphinx might have whipped up. Say, what *is* this? Some kind of religious tract?"

Morgan shrugged. The editor, he said, knew as much about it as he did. He had interviewed the queer pitchman—if one could call it that, since the answers he received left him, like the young traffic cop, only more puzzled than ever. The street-hawker represented "all firms and manufacturers of world goods," though he was "not a peddler." He was "a part of all religions" though he "advocated none of them," he had told the reporter. Anyone answering each of his three mysterious questions by the following Friday would receive "a great gift"—exactly what, the man would not say.

That was all Bill Morgan had been able to pump out of the fellow; and he was a clever young reporter, coming to "Blankville" from a New York daily. Fatso Roberts, the photographer, was also an expert at his job—yet on that Monday when he had snapped two shots of the strange pitchman standing behind his folding table, he must have been a little drunker than usual, considering how the pictures turned out in the *News* dark room on Friday.

But, even before that, Haverty eyed his two employees with a scowl of disfavor. Bill Morgan, on one hand, declared that the street-hawker wore a checked suit and resembled a race track tout—like the one who had recently parted him from a year's savings. Roberts, on the other hand, flatly insisted that the pitchman was middle-aged, half-bald, with a forehead curl plastered down and a handlebar moustache—like the bartender at the "White Cat" who was always urging him to have "just one more."

On Tuesday, therefore, Haverty decided to stroll past the corner of 1st and Main and have a look for himself.

When he reached the spot, a small crowd was gathered around the strange huckster, or whatever he was, peering at the little pamphlets and arguing heatedly one with another.

"Aw, it's easy!" one may was saying. "That first question—*Love* is the answer. Everybody wants to hold love but nobody can. Some are born with it, some never know they got it, and some never have any. And it's a cinch you can't buy or earn it, or get it because you're smart. . . Why, my girl told me the other night . . ."

"No, no," another disagreed cynically. "That's the answer to the second question, *Love* is. 'Which all men have in part but none in full!' And you can't escape from it. And it's a cinch a guy's happier when he keeps away from love. . That old battleax of mine! Never lets me out of her sight . . . !"

"You're both wrong," a young girl laughed. "*Wealth* is the answer to that first question. And the second—*Health*. Or maybe . Wait. Maybe it's the other way around. No; that wouldn't fit. . . ." She pored over the parchment sheet in her hand, frowning in deep thought.

"That third 'ne," an elderly man quavered. "That'll be *Old Age*, sure as shootin'. The more a feller works to stay young, the quicker he gets old. And a body sure feels like he's older and wiser than another 'ne his same age. And old age sure overpowers all else in life, like it says here. . ."

"No, I think *Hate* is the answer to that one. Or . . . *War?* That might fit. . . . But I don't think I'll mark mine yet. I'd like to think about it some more. Whatever that

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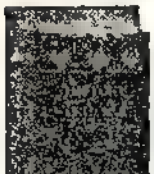

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prize is, I'll take it. Take anything that's free! Why, I didn't pay a cent for my chance on this quiz game, so what have I got to lose even if I don't win?"

Haverty moved closer, his eyes traveling over the disturbed, oddly discontented faces of the crowd. Like an echo, above or beneath the murmur of their voice, he thought he heard someone laughing—a deep sinister mocking laughter that made him feel at once angry and subtly afraid.

THEN he saw the pitchman standing behind his portable table: a tall suave gentleman in a pin-stripe suit and gold-rimmed pince nez. He reminded Haverty somewhat of a certain crooked tycoon who had once tried to bribe him to print a smear-campaign against the late Governor Morgan and Roberts had been, obviously, a little tight when they interviewed the fellow. He was nothing like either of their descriptions, the editor noted with a snort. Haverty walked away presently, the arguments of the crowd over the meanings of those three queerly-phrased riddles still ringing in his ears.

For the next few days, it was all one heard throughout the little city of "Blankville"—in beauty shops and chain stores, in dentists' waiting rooms and at the post office, around the fire station, at choir practice, or along the street where any two people met. Glib answers to all of the questions were on everyone's tongue, and no one seemed to agree with anyone else. A nebulous ill-feeling had crept over the citizens of the town, and neighbors who had trusted one another for years began to eye each other with suspicion.

"*Honesty* is the answer to that first question," one would say.

"'Which all men seek to hold but none may keep'?" a friend would break in. "Hmp! So that's the way you look at things, is it? And I suppose you think *Fear* is the answer to that third one. ? I never knew you had such a nasty slant on life!"

"And I never knew you were such a Pollyanna! By the way, I'll be busy on Saturday, so we won't have our usual round of golf "

"Suits me fine! You've probably padded

your scores all along, only I didn't dream you were the kind who . . ."

So it went, all over town. Races, creeds, and even individuals in the same family clashed over the meaning of the three questions which, Haverty remarked, perhaps delved too deeply into people who hitherto lived happily on the surface. It was as though a perverted adult had crept into a children's birthday party, whispering ideas and thoughts into ears too young to hear such sophistry.

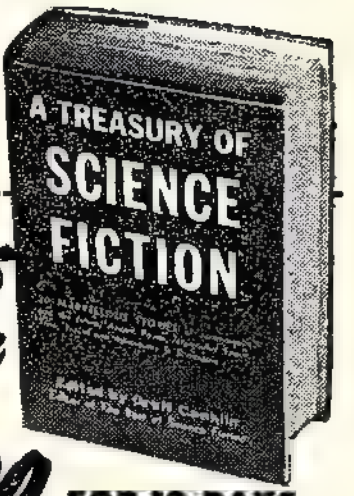
Every man, woman, and child in "Blankville" wondered, too, what "great gift" would be awarded to those who best answered the three riddles.

"Mark my words, it's just an advertising trick for some kind of new product," one barber sagely told a customer he was shaving. "Just wait and see; the winners will get a crate of some kind of crazy breakfast food!"

"I don't know that I agree," the customer said, wiping lather from his eyes. "This contest, or lottery, has the earmarks of religious ballyhoo, in my opinion. Some tent-revivalist will show up to hold meetings here—he's just building up interest. He'll answer those fool questions from his pulpit, and all anybody'll get will be a chance to join his church!"

"Could be," another customer called from the shoeshine chair. "But if you ask me, it's propaganda! Somebody trying to start another war. . . !"

But no one could say with any real authority just why the weird lottery was being held. Certainly it was not to make money, for those who took the little red-lettered "tickets" paid for them or not as they wished. Most people tossed a nickel or a dime on the table, assuming that the fellow was some sort of beggar with a new angle instead of the usual shoestrings or pencils in a hat. One wealthy matron, who had heard that the contest was "for civic betterment," laid a fifty dollar bill ostentatiously on the stand. The pile of money grew slowly day by day, seemingly uncounted and almost unnoticed by the man who stood silently behind the pitch-table, dealing out his small slips of paper across which three questions ran in shimmery red



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print like the distant line of a forest fire at night.

ON the morning of Friday, November 7, everyone in "Blankville" awoke with a tense irritated feeling of excitement. O'Reilly, yawning as he took up his early-morning stance on his accustomed corner, was the first to note that the strange pitch-man, with his table of pamphlets was gone.

He strolled over to the spot to lean against a lamppost, in readiness for the 7 o'clock rush hour, when he happened to see something protruding from the swinging trapdoor of a nearby trash-can. Idly,—sure that his eyes had deceived him—he moved closer and pulled it out.

Then, eyes bulging, he swung open the trap and began clawing out handfuls of what lay stuffed carelessly into the trash-can on top of its ordinary contents of waste paper and banana peels. What he had seen was a fifty dollar bill protruding from the slot. Inside was a wad of currency and silver, crammed through the opening as by a casual hand.

The young traffic cop dashed to the phone and called headquarters, to report that a startled burglar must have cached his loot there in flight. But no such robbery had been reported, or was since discovered.

Bill Morgan, the *News* reporter, rushed to the scene at once, with Fatso Roberts, the photographer, panting at his heels. But when Morgan phoned in his story of the currency in the trash-can—about $732, by quick count—Haverty cut him short.

"Never mind that! Forget it I want you to go to Beeman's Grocery on 14th. On the double! Their delivery boy had an accident about an hour ago. Front tire of his bicycle exploded. He was thrown off, but only scratched up a little."

"For Pete's sake!" Morgan cut in. "What's the big story in that?"

"Just this," Haverty's voice came, shakey and stifled, over the wire. "That kid ran over a piece of glass. he *thought*, until a customer at the store, the jeweler at Mace's, happened to see it and announced that what blew out that bicycle tire was . . a 120-carat uncut diamond! Larger than the Koh-i-noor. It was worth millions—but the

kid was so mad about his tire, he threw it down a sewer before they could tell him what it was!"

"I'm on my way. . !" yelled Morgan, but did not hang up until Haverty had said, in the same queer voice:

"Er . look, Bill. Somebody said there was one of those crazy lottery slips stuck on the bicycle tire . . . but with just one word on it. Just . . . 'I. *LUCK*', and nothing else. They say that kid filled out one of those thing and turned it in. He's feeble-minded; can't read or write. So he just copied some letters down on the slip from a cigarette ad across the street. L-U-C-K . . . that was his answer to the first question. . . ."

"Yeah. ?" Morgan swallowed a lump that had come into his throat, almost as though a hand had cut off his breathing. "Okay . . Okay, Jeff, I'll . . I'll check on it . . ."

MORGAN hailed a cab, and he and the puffing photographer climbed in. But halfway to Beeman's Grocery on 14th, the driver made a remark that caused the reporter to order him to drive rapidly in the other direction.

"Mean you ain't heard about it?" the cabby expanded. "Yeah—Mrs. Carter Pendergast. You know; the dame who's been plugging for free college education for slum kids here in town. Well, she went nuts last night at that big home of hers on Forrest Drive. Blew her top. The maid found her crouched in a corner of the basement, screaming to beat hell and tearing out her hair. There was one of them lottery tickets in her lap, with just the one word on it: No. II, and the word *KNOWLEDGE*. She kept screaming: 'Don't tell me the rest! I can't stand to hear any more'! The maid heard a mumbling voice and somebody laughing—real horrible, she said. But nobody was in the basement but the old lady. . ."

"Where is she now? Mrs. Pendergast, I mean?" Morgan demanded.

"Dead," the cabby shrugged. "I just told you, pal; didn' you hear me? She killed herself while the maid went to phone for help. Cut her throat."

But that was not all. When Morgan and

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Roberts returned to the *News* office, with their stories of the imbecile boy's accident and the Pendergast suicide, they found Haverty yelling into a phone and frantically motioning for a rewrite to take down the conversation on an extension. At last he hung up the receiver, and his hand was shaking.

"Bill . ." He mopped his forehead, and fixed the reporter with a peculiar look of fright in his usually unperturbed eyes. "Bill, I . . . I don't know what to make of this. That man, that pitchman with the folding table—who was he? *What* was he? Where's he gone? All the police in town have thrown out a dragnet for him, but there's no trace. He's obviously a madman, or an extremely sadistic practical joker! Or else," and now the editor's voice took on a completely different note, "or else he's. . *No!* That's ridiculous. I won't say it!"

He stormed over to the rewrite and bent over his copy, reading swiftly the lead he had typed. Morgan and Roberts, puzzled, strolled over to his side.

Haverty straightend, and mopped his face again.

"It's insane, it's fantastic! . . Bill, I just got a call from the Mercy Hospital. Dr. Kincaid, their top surgeon, was found a while ago, locked in a vacant room on the third floor. He . he was hanging up by his thumbs from a ceiling light. ."

"Wha-at!" the reporters jaw dropped. "He hung *himself*. . ?"

"No, no." Haverty muttered. "Somebody else . . But the room was *locked!* There's a window, but it's a three-floor drop. Nobody was in there, but just before an interne broke in, he heard somebody laughing like a maniac.

"Not Kincaid—he was unconcious From the burns."

"*Burns?*" Morgan stammered. "I thought you said. . . ?"

"I did," the editor lit a cigarette shakily and snubbed it out again. "But somebody —whoever hung him up there—had plugged in an electric sterilizer just under him, where he could stand on it and ease his thumbs if he could bear to sear his bare feet. He couldn't of course. So now they'll have to amputate both his thumbs. And . . . he'll never operate again. Best surgeon in this part of the country. . . ."

"What kind of a fiend would think up a thing like. ?" Roberts burst out, shuddering. "Somebody with a grudge?"

"No," Haverty shook his head. "It . . . was our friend again, our lottery friend. One of the tickets was pinned to Dr. Kincaid's shirt, with a single word on it: III. PAIN. Kincaid marked one of the things the day before, just as a joke, one of the nurses says. *'Pain'* was his answer to the third question, she says . . . and it seems our sadistic friends set out to prove to Kincaid just how right he was! . I don't understand all this. There's something . . diabolical about it all. As if we were being made sport of by . . by . . . Here!" he growled "Look at these, and then tell me I'm crazy!"

THERE were two papers on the editor's desk. He picked them up and thrust them at the bewildered reporter. Morgan stared at them, with Roberts peering over his shoulder.

The first was one of the lottery tickets he had seen so often, though three additions had been made to the fiery-printed sentences on the little parchment sheet. They read now:

I. *LUCK* IS THAT WHICH ALL MEN SEEK TO HOLD BUT NONE MAY KEEP; WHICH SOME ARE BORN WITH, SOME KNOW NOT THAT THEY POSSESS, AND SOME NEVER TASTE; WHICH WEALTH CAN NOT BUY NOR TOIL EARN NOR WISDOM ATTAIN.

II. *KNOWLEDGE* IS THAT WHICH ALL MEN HAVE IN PART BUT NONE IN FULL; WHICH ALL MEN FLEE BUT NONE MAY ESCAPE; WHICH EVERY MAN IS HAPPIEST WITHOUT YET SEEKS DILIGENTLY TO ACQUIRE.

III. *PAIN* IS THAT WHICH ALL MEN STRIVE TO DESTROY YET THEREBY OFTEN CAUSE MORE; WHICH ALL MEN THINK GREAT WHEN THEIR OWN BUT SMALL WHEN ANOTHER'S; WHICH OVERPOWERS EVERY OTHER FORCE IN LIFE, EVEN FOR THOSE WHO KNOW IT BEST.

The other paper in Morgan's hand was a still-wet print of the photograph Roberts had taken of the pitchman that first day,

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standing on the corner of 1st and Main behind his portable table on which the three neat stacks of papers lay.

Morgan gasped. Roberts cursed under his breath and rubbed his eyes.

The little folding table showed clearly in the picture, with its piles of white papers. In the background was a store front, clear of detail even to the mortar and the bricks.

But in between, the camera had caught no likeness, not even the faintest shadow, of the dark-eyed deep-voiced figure that everyone in "Blankville" seems to have seen as an entirely different personality—one elderly artist declaring that he wore a black robe and had the arrogant cruel face of the fallen Lucifer; and one little girl of six vowing that he had no face at all, but wore a masquerade costume, dark red, with scaley wings, spiked tail, and horns that jutted from the tight red hood.

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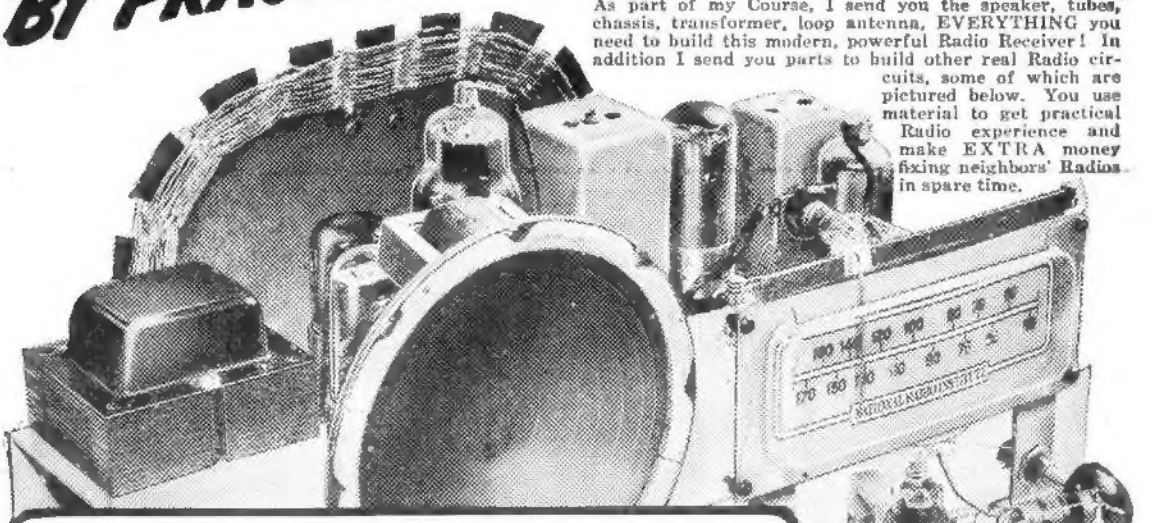

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